

# COLLEGE ENGLISH

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Vol. 22	CONTENTS FOR NOVEMBER 1960	No. 2
	1960: HISTORY OF THE NCTE COLLEGE SECTION: <i>William S. Ward</i>	71
	1929: THE DULL PATCHES: <i>J. B. Priestley</i>	77
	1930: A NATIONAL SURVEY OF FRESHMAN ENGLISH: <i>Stith Thompson</i>	78
	1932: ABOLITION OF FRESHMAN ENGLISH?: <i>H. Carter Davidson</i>	80
	1933: PAST HISTORY: <i>Ezra Pound</i>	81
	1941: FAULKNER'S POINT OF VIEW: <i>Warren Beck</i>	86
	1944: THE GENERATION THAT WASN'T LOST: <i>Malcolm Cowley</i>	93
	1946: ON READING POPE: <i>Maynard Mack</i>	99
	1948: A PHILOSOPHY OF LANGUAGE: <i>James B. Macmillan</i>	107
	1951: THE ROMANTIC UNITY OF "KUBLA KHAN": <i>Richard Fogle</i>	112
	1952: FESTE'S NIGHT: <i>Alan S. Downer</i>	117
	1954: THE POETRY OF DYLAN THOMAS: <i>David Daiches</i>	123
	1956: HAWTHORNE AND FAULKNER: <i>Randall Stewart</i>	128
	ROUND TABLE: "Bar Examinations" for NCTE Membership ( <i>Arthur L. Benson &amp; Fred Godsbalk</i> ), A Modified Proposal for "Bar Exams" ( <i>Eugene E. Slaught</i> )	133
	COUNCILETTER: News of the Year ( <i>Ruth G. Strickland</i> )	139

## A Note for Authors

After reading several hundred manuscripts, we venture to make some suggestions that may prove useful for our contributors.

**Subjects of Major Essays.** Anything that may interest English teachers is invited. Since *College English* seems to attract large numbers of articles on contemporary literature, essays which deal with earlier periods are particularly sought for balance. Analysis of a frequently taught work of literature, which may prove useful in the classroom, will generally be found more suitable for *College English* than details of the discovery of an obscure source of a minor work or an influence study involving second-rank writers (essays more suitable for the specialized journals). Informed, provocative, and useful essays on language, linguistics, and pedagogy continue, of course, to be welcome.

**Subjects of Round Table Articles.** Short explicatory pieces on familiar poems and short stories are especially invited. But there will always be room for new ideas about grading papers or useful techniques in teaching composition, or successful methods of breathing fresh life into a literary masterpiece. Also desirable are brief accounts of new or unusual ways of handling freshman English, or of constructing sophomore literature courses, or of developing a program for the English major, or of organizing English graduate study.

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it can be elevated from its "filler" status to a poetry section.

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**Length and Style.** Major essays should not exceed twelve typewritten (double-spaced) pages, Round Table articles, six. Anything longer must be clearly unusual and outstanding. The style should do credit to the subject. Lively pieces are preferred to the dull and pedantic, but a flippant style should not substitute for genuine wit.

**Manuscripts.** Follow the MLA Style Sheet (Revised Edition), except in references; omit place of publication and publisher without special significance; and in references to volumes, use Arabic instead of Roman numerals. Avoid footnotes wherever possible by including information in your text. Avoid block quotations, tables, graphs, and other art-work. Please send one copy held by a paper clip (but not a staple), with a self-addressed envelope to which stamps are clipped. Decisions will be made as quickly as possible, but delays may result from an avalanche of manuscripts, academic holidays, distance of an advisory editor, or a difficult decision.

The Editor

## For Contributors and Readers

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# COLLEGE ENGLISH

Volume 22

NOVEMBER 1960

Number 2

## A Short History of the NCTE College Section

WILLIAM S. WARD\*

When the National Council of Teachers of English came into being in 1911, the time was right for founding an organization which was national in scope, which was concerned with English at all levels, and whose chief focus—at the college level as well as in the grades—was on the problems of classroom teaching. Three national organizations concerned with English were already in existence—the National Conference on Uniform Entrance Requirements in English, the English Round Table of the Secondary Section of the National Education Association, and the Modern Language Association of America; but each of them was too specialized to qualify on all of the points just mentioned. The first did have high school and college representation, but its only purpose was that of solving the problems involved in the administration of college entrance examinations in English. The second was

concerned only with the high school and was neither autonomous, representative, nor permanent. The third—the Modern Language Association—was too specialized also, but the complexity of its relationship to the early NCTE, and especially to the College Section, cannot be dismissed in a sentence or two.

When MLA came into existence in 1883, it was concerned with pedagogical matters as well as with scholarship. The first issue of its publication in 1884-85, in fact, contained articles which reveal this concern. Articles of this sort quickly yielded ground to literary and linguistic scholarship, but by 1894 the MLA annual convention had a "Pedagogical Section." The Association gradually underwent changes, however, so that by 1903 the Pedagogical Section was discontinued; and before 1911, the year when NCTE was organized, concern with the advancement of research had led MLA to leave all talk about teaching to others.

At least this was true of the parent Modern Language Association. In the summer of 1895, however, college teachers (many of them MLA members) in the "central states" had organized what they called the Central Modern Language Conference. In December of the same year they petitioned the Modern Language Association to become an official geographical division of the Association and at the convention of 1896 were duly admitted as the "Central Division of the Modern Language Association of America." From the first the new association devoted at least

\*It is a pleasure to acknowledge the assistance of those who have provided help in the preparation of this short history. Without their willingness to supply information on given points, to read the manuscript and test it against their recollections, or to help in some other way, this account would be less adequate than it is. My especial thanks, therefore, to Harold B. Allen, T. A. Barnhart, Hardin Craig, W. Wilbur Hatfield, J. N. Hook, James H. Mason, Porter G. Perrin, Warner G. Rice, and James R. Squire. Any errors in fact or interpretation, however, are mine, not theirs.

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one program to matters related to teaching, and by 1902 there were formal "Departmental Meetings" (i.e., in English, Germanic languages and Romance languages) set aside for "subjects of importance to the advancement of instruction." It is not surprising, therefore, that in 1904, after the abolition of the Pedagogical Section by the parent organization in 1903, the president of the Central Division, A. R. Hohlfeld, should deliver a strong protest against the action. Neither is it surprising that the Division should continue to sponsor its own pedagogical programs, even after the NCTE was organized.

The reason for this is not hard to find. For one thing, though the newly organized NCTE had its own High School-College Section (as well as a Normal-Elementary Section), it was thought of primarily as a high school group. As a matter of fact, this view of NCTE, as well as the desire to cooperate with it, was reflected in the vote of the Central Division at its convention of 1912 "to cooperate with members of the National Council of Teachers of English representing high schools." Even after the college members of NCTE formed their own section in 1913-14, however, close cooperation between the two groups continued. For three or four years, in fact, there appears to have been a considerable amount of identity in the leadership of the two groups. Four influential members in the MLA group (Fred N. Scott, Edwin M. Hopkins, Edwin L. Miller and James Fleming Hoscic) were to become presidents of NCTE; four (Edwin Mims, Hardin Craig, Karl Young and Fred Scott) were to become chairmen of NCTE's College Section; and four (John M. Clapp, in addition to Hoscic, Scott, and Miller) were to be known in time to come as the principal founders of NCTE.

The committee work of the two or-

ganizations was also closely coordinated at least until 1916, and perhaps had not ceased entirely when the Central Division of MLA voted at its 1923 convention to suspend its activities "indefinitely." Both organizations (as well as the parent MLA, the NEA, and the American Philological Association), for example, worked together on the preparation of the report on uniform grammatical terminology, and both were deeply involved in the committee work and preparation of a report on Preparation of College Teachers of English. In fact, NCTE Secretary James Fleming Hoscic, chairman of the committee, was careful to explain in his 1913 NCTE convention progress report that the committee was primarily an MLA committee. There was common concern, too, about the teaching of composition. The first important issue to come before the NCTE convention of 1911, in fact, concerned the size of composition classes and came as a result of data presented by MLA stalwart Edwin M. Hopkins. Less than a month later, it is interesting to note, Hopkins, chairman of the Central Division MLA Committee of Five on English Composition Teaching, presented the Committee's report at the annual December convention of that organization. At the MLA convention of 1912 Hopkins gave a report on the "labor and cost" of composition teaching, and less than a year later at its 1913 convention the NCTE passed a resolution which began by commending the North Central Association for its consideration of a regulation requiring accredited schools to limit high school English teachers to five classes of 25 students each. The resolution went on, however, to urge further reduction, first to 100 and then to 80 students per teacher, with "time for conference and theme reading counted as teaching time." The maximum for college instructors, the resolution concluded, should be 60 students.



In offering these resolutions, it seems reasonable to assume, the College Section of NCTE and the "Departmental" section of the Central Division of MLA must again have been working closely together.

As the first decade of NCTE and the College Section came to an end and the 1920's got under way, no unusual developments took place. Various committees wrestled with matters which make it clear that old problems never cease to wear new faces and that the over-all outlook in the teaching of English in 1920 must not have been much different from what it is in 1960. Besides the above-mentioned reports on grammatical terminology, the training of college teachers, and the size of composition classes, there were others on "The Correlation of High School and College Composition," "The Preparation of High School Teachers of English," "Linguistic Science and the Teaching of Correct English," "Is the Ph.D. Program Equipping Graduates for the Jobs They Will Hold?" If some problems failed to permit final solutions, however, new ideas were being born. The Committee on Essentials under the chairmanship of Sterling A. Leonard, for example, has been described as "a fountain of progressive thought, expressing itself through addresses and writings in many places." And as the years passed, of course, semantics, structural linguistics, "Communication," as well as other new ideas and teaching methods, found an early testing ground on College Section programs or elsewhere before NCTE audiences.

By 1928 the membership growth of the Council as a whole, plus the desire to provide journals designed to meet the professional needs of elementary, high school, and college members, led to the establishment of the College Edition of the *English Journal*. When the Council was organized in 1911, the *Journal*

(owned and financed by Secretary James Fleming Hosic at his own risk since the Council had no funds) attempted to cover the entire range of English teaching. As the Council succeeded, so did the *English Journal*, of course, with the result that in 1917 Editor Hosic engaged W. Wilbur Hatfield as associate editor, and in 1921 on leaving Chicago for Columbia University sold it to him. In 1925 the elementary field was relinquished to the *Elementary English Review*, and in January 1928, as already indicated, further specialization came about with the establishment of the "College Edition" of the *English Journal*, in which thirty or more pages dealing with college matters replaced those dealing with high schools. This arrangement continued until October 1939, when the College Edition of the *English Journal* became *College English*.

James Fleming Hosic, therefore, was the magazine's first editor, and was followed by W. Wilbur Hatfield, who saw it through its various stages of *English Journal*, College Edition, and *College English*. After the May issue of 1955 he was succeeded by Frederick W. Gwynn, who served until May 1960 and in turn was succeeded by James E. Miller, Jr., who thus has just become the fourth NCTE editor in the *College English* line of descent.

In addition to the establishment of *College English* as a separate publication in 1939, there were other events of the 1930's which call for brief mention. One of these (already alluded to above) was the publication of Sterling A. Leonard's *Current English Usage* (1932) as No. 1 in the NCTE Monograph Series, and another was *The Teaching of College English*. The latter volume, compiled by Oscar James Campbell and published in 1934 as No. 3 in the Monograph Series, is made up of reports based on the research done by members of the College Committee of the Curriculum Com-

mission, and ranges in scope from the articulation of high school and college English to the Ph.D. program. Two other notable volumes belonging to this decade, and published as No. 7 and No. 10 in the NCTE Monograph Series, were *Facts about English Usage* (1938), by Albert H. Marckwardt and Fred G. Walcott, and *American English Grammar* (1940), by Charles C. Fries.

Another significant development of the 1930's was a meeting of the College Section during the 1939 convention of the Modern Language Association. This was the first time that the College Section had held a session not connected with an annual meeting of the Council. The announced topic for the meeting was "The Statement of the Committee of Twenty-Four," published earlier in *PMLA* and the College Edition of the *English Journal* (vol. 28, April, 1939, pp. 261-67). Prepared by Louise M. Rosenblatt, Howard Mumford Jones, and Oscar James Campbell, the "Statement" had been submitted to and approved by a committee of twelve members of NCTE and twelve members of MLA during the MLA convention of 1938. Two principal purposes apparently lay behind the appointment of the joint committee, its report, and the College Section discussion of the report at the MLA convention of 1939. One, of course, was the preparation of a platform that might lead to improvement in the teaching of English in both high school and college. The other was that of bringing about a closer cooperation between the two national organizations. As pointed out in some detail earlier, NCTE (and especially its College Section) operated in close cooperation with the Central Division of MLA during its early years. With the termination of the Central Division and its Department of Instruction in 1923, however, the close ties between NCTE and MLA were largely broken. It may have been anticipation

of this termination, in fact, which led the College Section at its November 1923 annual convention to undertake a discussion of the future role of the Section in relation to subject matter and methods. As might have been expected, there were differences of opinion on this occasion, but in general it was agreed that the College Section was dedicated to the view that scholarship and instruction are unalterably wedded, though with the understanding that the emphasis should be on the scholar as teacher rather than the reverse. By the middle 1930's, however, there were those in the College Section who felt that this balance between scholarship and methods had been too much disturbed and that the role of subject matter and scholarship was being unduly neglected. As a result there were some who withdrew their active support from the organization. By 1938, therefore, the time was right for a joint MLA-NCTE committee to bring the two organizations back toward the harmonious cooperation they had enjoyed in earlier years. That these events of the late 1930's should lead ultimately to an even greater degree of cooperation during the 1950's will be seen a little later.

It was in 1944 that the College Section (as well as the other sections) was reorganized into its present structural form. Prior to this there had been an appointive Section chairman and (after the initial years) his committee, but the relationship of the Section to the Council and of the chairman to the Section had been somewhat informal, with both existing primarily for the sake of the Section program at the annual convention. The action of 1944 was taken in the belief that if the Section had greater autonomy and the responsibility for self-direction, a greater sense of purpose would develop. Thus it was that a steering committee known as the Section Committee and consisting

of a chairman and five members was set up, two members to be elected each year for three-year terms. In addition, the reorganization provided that the chairman of the Section Committee should be a member of the NCTE Executive Committee and that the Section should elect the advisers to the editor of *College English* and six of its members to represent it on the NCTE Board of Directors. The only modification of this organizational arrangement that has taken place since it was originally adopted is that with the founding of the Conference on College Composition and Communication a seventh member, chosen by that organization, has been added to the Section Committee.

Another important development within the Council and College Section took place on April 1-2, 1949, when five hundred teachers interested in what happens to a student's English when he makes the transition from high school to college came together for two days in Chicago. The way for this meeting had been paved two years earlier when the NCTE and the Speech Association of America co-sponsored a meeting of those interested in the teaching of reading, writing, and speech to college freshmen, but it was not until the 1949 meeting that the first steps toward a permanent organization were taken. Formal authorization of the group as the Conference on College Composition and Communication took place a few months later at the NCTE convention of 1949.

The CCCC is unique among Council groups in that it holds its own annual conference, publishes its own journal, and assesses its own membership fee. It is, therefore, a semi-autonomous group with its own constitution, its own executive committee, and its own officers, except that the treasurer of the Council is also treasurer of the Con-

ference. The CCCC is, of course, closely linked to the College Section and the Council in a variety of ways. For example, membership in the College Section is prerequisite to membership in CCCC, the Chairman of the College Section participates in CCCC Executive Committee meetings in an *ex-officio* capacity, and the Chairman of CCCC in NCTE Executive Committee meetings. In addition, the NCTE office carries on the routine business of CCCC by handling memberships, mailing the quarterly issues of the CCCC magazine, taking care of most of its promotional activities, conducting correspondence of a routine sort, and so on. It is not too much to say, perhaps, that the prospering of this group has added both zest and numbers to the College Section.

During the last decade the College Section has prospered. So far as size is concerned, the number of members and subscribers has increased from fewer than 4,000 in 1950 to almost 14,000 in 1960; and other developments have kept pace with this remarkable membership growth. In 1950 came the first quarterly issue of the bulletin of the Conference on College Composition and Communication, and in 1953 the first annual issue of the *Yearbook of Comparative and General Literature* under the auspices of the Committee on Comparative Literature in collaboration with the MLA. In 1955, as mentioned in another connection, Frederick L. Gwynn became editor of *College English*, and three years later another magazine was added to the list of NCTE publications. This was *Abstracts of English Studies*, which summarizes scholarly articles of interest to English teachers in more than 400 periodicals. It is published monthly and is edited by an editorial team headed by Lewis Sawin. Another significant contribution to the scholar and teacher during this same year was *Contemporary Literary Scholarship: a Critical Review*,

edited by Lewis Leary and sponsored by the Committee on Literary Scholarship and the Teaching of English.

Other committees affiliated with the College Section have also published reports which are available in the national NCTE office as either pamphlets or reprints. One of these is *The Preparation and Certification of Teachers of English* (high school), edited in 1956 by Donald Tuttle for the Committee on the Preparation and Certification of Teachers of English. Another is *College English for Non-Major Students*, a report prepared by Edward Foster for the Committee on College English for the Non-Major Student and originally printed in the May 1959 issue of *College English*.

Three other significant developments during the closing years of the decade deserve special mention. One is that during 1958 representatives of the NCTE, the MLA, the College English Association, and the American Studies Association participated in a series of conferences to consider important problems facing teachers of English at all educational levels. These jointly-sponsored conferences, known as the Cooperative English Program, resulted in the publication of *The Basic Issues in the Teaching of English* in 1959. The past year has also witnessed the beginning of an NCTE project to prepare a six-volume series of textbooks for teaching English in foreign lands. Being

developed under a special grant from the United States Information Agency, the series will be unique in that it will be designed for use with people with different native language backgrounds rather than aimed at users of a particular language. William Slager is coordinator of the project, and Harold B. Allen is chairman of an advisory committee of linguists that is advising basic approaches. Finally, the NCTE is taking the lead in an attempt to persuade Congress to include English in a revised version of the National Defense Education Act, and is being supported by the MLA, with cooperation from other groups.

As this first half century ends with a golden anniversary celebration, one may say in retrospect, a conspicuous feature of the Council—in its projects, in its publications, and in its meetings—has been that of representing various points of view rather than of adopting or searching for an official one. In general, of course, Council policy has been liberal and progressive, but at the same time opportunity has never been denied clear-thinking conservatives who could write or speak with vigor. No doubt mistakes have been made, but as a former Section Chairman put it recently, the important thing is that they were made by "human beings doing the best they could in rangy and often contradictory situations." The future can hardly ask for better than this.

#### *A List of College Section Chairmen, 1913-1960*

Edwin Mims, Vanderbilt University; Karl Young, University of Wisconsin; Fred N. Scott, University of Michigan; J. M. Thomas, University of Minnesota; Ashley H. Thorndike, Columbia University; Allan Abbott, Teachers College, Columbia University; Hardin Craig, University of Iowa; C. C. Fries, University of Michigan; Thomas C. Knott, G. and C. Merriam Co.; John S. Kenyon, Hiram College; O. J. Campbell, University of Michigan; Roscoe E. Parker, University of Tennessee; Atwood H. Townsend, New York University; Robert M. Gay, Simmons College; Warner G. Rice, University of Michigan; George B. Parks, Queens College; Porter G. Perrin, Colgate University & University of Washington; Roy P. Basler, George Peabody College for Teachers; Tremaine McDowell, University of Minnesota; Margaret M. Bryant, Brooklyn College; Theodore Hornberger, University of Minnesota; James T. Fullington, Ohio State University; Barris Mills, Purdue University; Brice Harris, Pennsylvania State University; T. A. Barnhart, St. Cloud State College; George W. Arms, University of New Mexico; William S. Ward, University of Kentucky.

## A Sampler from the Past

*Editorial Note: It would be presumptuous for anyone to select the best essays from past issues of College English, especially in view of our embarrassment of riches. For this reason, the following essays are presented as a sampler of both the high quality and the wide-ranging interests maintained through the years. Many people, including the advisory editors, have aided in the laborious task of culling old issues for articles to reprint. But the final selection was the responsibility (sometimes agonizing) of the editor.*

### 1929: THE DULL PATCHES

J. B. PRIESTLEY

Now and again we are offered tabloid versions of various great works of literature. Epics, huge novels, unwieldy histories, and the like, are cut and carved, and finally served up in the form of bright titbits. The cream of literature is neatly skimmed for you. Is this a good practice or a bad one? One of our best-known dramatic critics once declared, in my hearing, that it was a very good practice indeed, and said there was not enough of it.

He argued that we have not the time now, with so much to learn and enjoy, to do anything but make acquaintance with an author's best things. (How is it that the more labor-saving, time-saving devices there are in the world, the less time we have?) Why should we waste our days plowing through an author's dull or worthless patches? He did not hesitate to take Dickens himself as an example of an author who could be severely cut with advantage. If most of his novels were half their present size, he declared, it would be better for everybody. The time saved would enable us to make acquaintance with other writers, who might otherwise have to be neglected. Let us have the best of everybody! That was his argument.

I hope that nobody who has the slightest pretensions to being a student of literature—and you can be a student of literature without having examinations to pass—will be taken in by this argument. I have no objection to anybody making a selection of titbits, characteristic or favorite passages

(I have done it myself), so long as it is understood that such a selection is not offered as a substitute for the original works themselves. Volumes of this kind should be regarded simply as bedside books, week-end companions, and so forth.

It is probably true to say that most of us who go on rereading an author like Dickens take a fair amount of skipping exercise on the way. We may ignore whole chapters, having come to the conclusion that such chapters have nothing to tell us that we want to hear. But then we have already a solid acquaintance with the novels as a whole. And a reader new to the work would undoubtedly arrive at a better knowledge of Dickens by reading only three of the novels, but reading them from beginning to end, than he would by carefully going through a selection from them all, offered to him as "The Best Passages from Dickens"; I think the author himself, knowing the importance of design, proportion, contrast, light and shade, in his work, would be the first to admit this.

Major works of literature are naturally of a considerable bulk or length. The *Canterbury Tales*, *Paradise Lost*, *Don Juan*, *The Ring and the Book*, Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, *Tom Jones*, *Tristram Shandy*, *Sartor Resartus*—to name the first that come to mind—are works that make a substantial demand upon a reader's time and attention. It is likely, too, that they will make an equal demand upon a reader's patience. These things may be masterpieces, but



that does not mean that they offer one long crescendo of excitement. They are, we might say, as large as life. They can be, in their own way, as overwhelming, terrible, beautiful, as life. And no doubt many readers have discovered that they can also be, in places, as dull as life. It would be interesting to know how many masterpieces have been set aside by men and women fully capable of enjoying them simply because these impatient persons were shocked to find that a masterpiece is not all Alpine peaks, but has its flat places, in which nothing of much importance appears to be happening.

To such readers the various potted versions must seem the work of a public benefactor. But in these potted versions, the actual masterpieces themselves are destroyed. It is as if you should visit a great man and find his right leg or left ear on view. Somebody once boiled down the whole literature of the world into about a score of volumes. It says something for the good sense of the reading public that these absurd volumes are now a drug on the market, familiar, but unwelcome, guests at every second-hand bookseller's.

There can be no dodging. You must pay for size. In order to appreciate Gibbon's great chronicle of the Roman Empire, its noble pageantry and the Atlantic roll of the

narrative, you must settle down and go steadily through all those volumes of his. If you want to enjoy properly the summits and intoxicating mountain air of literature, you must be willing to plod up the lower slopes. If ever there was a superb artist in verse, determined to make the most of everything under his hand, it was Milton, yet even he could not create an epic consisting of nothing but enchanting situations and great lines. To a prosodist, there may not be a dull moment in *Paradise Lost*, but to most of us there are a good many. We find our way through patches of undergrowth, cross little deserts, but then we have our reward, for soon the peaks shine before us and magical lights come flashing in the sky. We have seen everything in its right proportion.

In his *Canterbury Tales*, Chaucer, that great and artful realist, tried to achieve the effect of actual life, and he did not hesitate to include among his tales stuff as tedious as the talk of a club bore. He went so far, being a humorist, as to make himself one of the worst offenders, in his account of Sir Thopas. But he does not allow himself to go on too long. "No more of this for Goddes dignitee!" he is told, and the dull patch is over and we are the better for having had it there, as he himself knows perfectly well. We must not be afraid of the dull patches.

## 1930: A NATIONAL SURVEY OF FRESHMAN ENGLISH

STITH THOMPSON

In spite of the fact that everything in school or university seems to have been surveyed and resurveyed till the sight of a questionnaire makes the gorge rise, one investigation has been almost entirely neglected in the past. Those of us who have been trying to direct a course in Freshman composition know how little information has been available as to what others in this field are doing. Aside from casual contacts which most of us try to keep up and the helpful suggestions that have come from instructors who have taught under other systems, many of our attempts at improvement of the course have been made in the dark. Devices already in successful

operation elsewhere have been independently invented and the painful process of trial and error needlessly repeated.

The present survey of conditions in Freshman composition is therefore of the greatest interest to every teacher and particularly to every director of this course. The thorough fashion in which Professor Taylor has gathered and interpreted his data in his recent study<sup>1</sup> merits our heartfelt thanks.

<sup>1</sup>Warner Taylor, *A National Survey of Conditions in Freshman English*. University of Wisconsin Bureau of Educational Research Bulletin No. 11, May, 1929.



This investigation is first concerned with the content of the course. The author finds the use of a rhetoric still the rule everywhere except in the eastern colleges, where there is a higher standard of selection of the student than elsewhere. The students in the rest of the country still need some formal introduction to simple rhetorical principles. The handbook is likewise used nearly everywhere even in those institutions that have abandoned the rhetoric. It seems well established. A volume of selected essays is nearly always the third text for the composition course. The tendency is toward compilations of discussion essays which may act as a challenge to the student's thinking. The question is raised as to whether the older essay may not have been too indiscriminately abandoned.

One question in connection with the composition texts that would have been of some interest is the extent to which, in the lower groups of students, some kind of exercise leaves or practice sheets are found useful.

The author next investigated the relation of Freshman composition to literature—that is, to literature studied for itself and not as a model for composition. Generally speaking, the eastern institutions combine composition and literature, whereas the practice in the rest of the country is so varying as to make a rule impossible. The answers were often equivocal, for the question is frequently hard to answer by a straight yes or no. In our own institution, for example, composition is required, and literature as an additional course is elective, but is elected by a great majority of the Freshmen. In those universities reporting "straight rhetoric" courses, I should be interested to know whether Sophomore literature is not a requirement. If all the Freshmen are to have a year of literature the next year, the "straight rhetoric" course more easily justifies itself.

The decline of the position of argumentation and narration in the course was no surprise. Each involves a special technique that can hardly be well taught in the few weeks possible for it in the regular course. More and more the value of exposition and the essay as a fundamental discipline becomes apparent.

Our staff would have been glad to know what success other institutions are having with our two most successful exercises for Freshmen—the personal character analysis (rather than the narrative autobiography) and the long paper based on reading, the "project" as we call it, involving the proper handling of bibliography, notes, and planning in the large.

Grouping of students on the basis of training and capacity seems to be growing fast, especially for the larger institutions. Those who have tried this device have little tendency to drop it. The details of grouping methods and especially the manner in which the deficiencies of the lowest group are dealt with are points about which more discussion would have been welcomed.

A study of salaries paid Freshmen English instructors reveals that the average minimum and maximum is \$1,650 and \$2,182, respectively. This scale refers only to instructors, not to persons of higher rank on the Freshman composition staff. Generalizations from the figures are difficult though the smaller colleges (except in the East) pay less than the large universities.

The average teaching load for composition throughout the country is 93. My own experience is that the absolute upper limit of efficiency is 75.

Of importance to administrators is the discussion of a four-year tenure-of-office rule for instructors. Its use is confined to about 11 per cent of the institutions. Salaries in these colleges are somewhat higher than elsewhere so that these positions are at a premium. The pertinent question is raised as to whether a certain nucleus of rather permanent Freshmen composition teachers may be valuable. And this brings up the subject of women instructors—who do often seem to be willing to settle down to a life of efficient Freshman teaching without any idea of going farther in their academic career. The figures show that "the East and South prefer to have their men taught by men, their women by women; and that the Middle West and West, the regions de-

voted to co-education, are committed to no such policies."

Professor Taylor finds an increasing tendency for the older teachers, of professional rank, to cease their connection with Freshman English as soon as possible. How much this is to be deplored is a question that would admit of much discussion.

The use of readers for themes is the practice in about a third of the institutions studied, and is more prevalent in the small than the large. As one who looks on the use of readers as a deplorable practice, I am heartened by the fact that it is no more common than it is.

A large number of the institutions, particularly the great universities, use graduate assistants as teachers. Professor Taylor sees no danger in this situation so long as the proportion of these assistants to the regular staff is kept low enough to permit their absorption into the system.

The study ends with brief consideration of several miscellaneous matters. Conferences with students, important as they are, do not occur with regularity in about one-third of the institutions. I should have been interested to know whether regular conferences count on a teacher's weekly teaching schedule. They do in our own institution.

Exemptions from Freshman composition may take place in only 9 per cent of the institutions. The course thus seems to be fundamental in most college curriculums.

Finally, investigation is made of the average number of words per week required in the course. Five hundred words is the rule.

At the end Professor Taylor summarizes the tendencies he has noted in the course of his investigation. Five of these he discusses: (1) the increasing popularity of placement tests; (2) the widespread and growing tendency to section students according to ability; (3) the trend toward abandoning the rhetoric as a textbook; (4) the increasing introduction of literature into Freshman English; (5) the inauguration of English "clinics"—methods of checking on upper-classmen found delinquent in English.

On the whole, Professor Taylor's study leaves one with the impression that the course is steadily improving and that its serviceableness in the future seems assured. To achieve this end there is needed continual alertness of directors and teachers in the improvement of instruction and a clear understanding of what others are doing. For this understanding the present study is the most important aid that we now have.

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### 1932: SHOULD FRESHMAN COMPOSITION BE ABOLISHED? COLLEGE SECTION MEETING, NCTE

H. CARTER DAVIDSON, *Acting Secretary*

In the absence of the chairman, Mr. O. J. Campbell of the University of Michigan, Mr. Charles C. Fries of the same institution called the meeting to order at 9:10 A.M. In the discussion of the topic: "Should the Course in Freshman Composition Be Abolished?" Mr. Warner Taylor of the University of Wisconsin read a paper in defense of the course, and Mr. Alvin C. Eurich of the University of Minnesota attacked the current practices. The papers were followed by open forum discussion.

Mr. Cowden of the University of Michigan complained that other departments were frequently unwilling to co-operate. He explained the individual consultation

method, the ability sectioning, and the excusing of unusual students practiced at the University of Michigan. He also complained of the difficulty of securing full professors to teach Freshmen, because of the fear of losing caste.

Mr. Eurich felt that his plan would not injure the caste of the instructors if it were properly handled; he pointed to the schools of education and engineering at the University of Minnesota as examples.

Mr. Fries noted that the School of Business Administration at the University of Michigan has had such English experts connected with their faculties, but that the men not doing their work in an English

department as such lost ground professionally.

Mr. Eurich objected that the man who taught nothing but Freshman composition was in no better position.

Mr. Bryan of Northwestern University objected to the double load of English and other departmental contents upon the shoulders of one man. He recalled that such correlating plans had been tried and abandoned at Missouri and elsewhere. He also resented the implication that the composition teachers have not been experimenting along valuable lines, and asserted that at Northwestern University experiments had been conducted for eighteen years and more.

Miss Ferguson of Crane College, Chicago, reported that the placement tests were improving rapidly in their accuracy, and would eventually be quite safe for sectioning.

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Mr. Hopkins of the University of Kansas inquired whether the suggestion to drop Freshman composition had originated within the English teaching profession or from without.

Mr. Fries explained that the idea was largely due to administrative pressure.

Miss Weeks offered the suggestion that, if every teacher in the department taught one Freshman section, there would be no loss of caste.

Mr. Davidson of Carleton College spoke of the University of Chicago plan as an attempt on a large scale to combine instruction in the matter of the four divisions with training in writing under English

instructors. He objected to four assumptions of Mr. Eurich concerning the present situation in composition teaching: first, that a placement test at the end of three months of training is a sufficient guide to the achievement of students in a composition course; second, that the present composition course has no content value of its own, but must ally itself with other departments; third, that the instructors do not correlate the writing with the individual interests of the students; and fourth, that neither the teachers nor the students enjoy or gain anything from the course. He asserted that the majority of composition teachers look upon the Freshman course as the greatest teaching opportunity in the college, and that students look back upon it as the most valuable orientation they received.

Mr. Eurich confessed that if all that had been said of the Freshman composition course by its defenders was true, he not only approved of it but desired to extend its benefits into the work of the other departments and the later years.

Mr. Fries pointed out that the plan of having all department members of professorial rank teach a section of Freshman composition would not only mean the sacrificing of sound teaching of the great numbers of graduate students now at all universities, but was somewhat unsound in that it assumed that such a change would necessarily of itself improve the quality of Freshman teaching.

Miss Ferguson closed the discussion with the remark that the students as a whole have no more vital interest in history than in English composition.

## 1933: PAST HISTORY

EZRA POUND

For a man connected with education, the editor of this magazine is a marvel of open mindedness. He believes that men who make literature know something that those who merely teach it do not. The longer and the more acrimonious the correspondence between us becomes, the more nearly impossible it seems to establish ANY communication between the two groups.

When Remy de Gourmont wrote me that a writer's sole pleasure was the untrammelled expression of what he was thinking ("*ce qu'il pense*") he used the present tense of the verb. He didn't refer to something the writer HAD THOUGHT.

Nobody thought it wd. be a nice thing for the aged Theodore Roosevelt to charge

up San Juan Hill yet again in 1914 to wrest Cuba from the Spaniards. Frobenius notes the same distinction between the tenses of the verb in the healthy stage of narrative production. His Africans talk about what the leopard and antelope *are doing* and *saying NOW*, not what they did or said in the time of Aesop. They call the Aesop, "school book exercise."

Everything I have to say about Joyce's *work as such*, has already been printed. Mr Hatfield is eminently correct in saying that the gen. pbk. and "his readers" have not read it, and he might have added "it wd. be impossible for more than ½ a dozen of them to get at it." This fact may shed a little light on the difficulties one had in "putting him over," not as critic but as impresario—one who took on the job or "impresa."

*Mr Joyce from birth till his election to the Irish Academy*

I did not discover Mr Joyce. Mr Yeats discovered him, but discovered him as a writer of severe and conventional lyrics—the only Irish verse which had sufficient severity for me to consider it relative to "our own" imagiste and pre-Amygist ambitions in 1912 and '13 (vide my anthology *Des Imagistes* 1913-14).

A dirty, bigoted intrigue in Dublin caused the destructions of the first edition of *Dubliners*. As nearly as I can remember Mr Mencken and the *Egoist* received some of these stories from me in typescript and printed them before the volume appeared.

The *Egoist* then serialized *The Portrait* and, at my suggestion, began publishing books, among which were *Tarr*, *Prufrock*, *The Portrait of the Artist*, *Quia Pauper Amavi* (containing "Homage to Propertius"). The *Little Review* undertook the serialization of *Ulysses*, and from that date onward the story of Joyce's publication is fairly well known.

The significance of the story is: 1st, that there was then in Ireland the same brute bigotry that has since effaced that country from the map of mundane intelligence. It did so almost as soon as their party of intelligence had worked thru into an effective public manifest, i.e., hardly had they obtained more or less of "self-govern-

ment" when they saddled themselves with a censorship almost, though not quite, as idiotic as our own.

2nd, that England as a "literary world" was dominated by three or four sets of detrimentals, among which:

A. publishers moved by no motive save avarice.

B. a few british gents, honest in financial matters, well dressed in daily life, and obtuse.

C. a generation of more hustling writers impervious to a number of values.

80% of such literature of my generation (from 1910 to 1930) as has any solid value, has been published only via specially founded "amateur" publishing houses. The whole of organized publishing, the solid wall of purveyors of literature, the Canbys, Gosses weekly supplementers, etc., has been steadily against this 80%. Tho' the supplements and commercial house have come to heel after the fact.

These people have obfuscated your world (O general reader!) and you still waste time leaving them in control of the distribution of printed matter.

Not one of the writers who give vitality to present literature wd. have reached you had these people been left to their own devices or if a small hated group had not resisted their efforts (conscious or unconscious) to starve that group into submission.

*The Portrait* and *Ulysses* were serialized by small honest magazines, created to aid communication of living work; after a lapse of years, these vols. arrived at such a state of acceptance that parasitic publishers issued them. The Tauchnitz which cares only for money but pretends to other aims, issued *The Portrait* and the Albatross issued *Dubliners* and *Ulysses* in continental cheap editions, indicating that the books had passed out of the exclusive circle of people who think and want to know what is being thought, and into the general mass of people who read because an author has a "name," etc.

*The quality of Mr. Joyce's work*

The facts about Joyce's writing are no different from what I have, at various times during the past 20 years, stated them to be. In many ways Joyce has not gone

further than Henry James, at any rate H.J. was the first man to extend the art of the novel beyond the territory already occupied by the french. The serious student can find much of this matter analyzed and presented in H. James's prefaces, and in one novel, *The Sacred Fount*, which James refrained from discussing.

Joyce does not proceed from James, but directly from Flaubert and Ibsen.

In *Dubliners*, English prose catches up with Flaubert (as I indicated, I think, in *The Egoist*). This was a great and cheering event in those days.

The prevailingly active line-up in England in the 1900 to 1910s was the Wells-Bennet-Chesterton, that simply did *not* perceive more than two thirds of the human spectrum. As for Shaw, when Joyce later produced his magnum opus, Mr Shaw considered that no book was worth three guineas. That is the measure of Mr Shaw's values.

Prose did not begin in the 19th century. Flaubert wrote a certain kind of prose. Just as a great many inventions have followed Mr Edison's inventions or as Mr Edison may be said to have done a great deal of other people's work FOR them, so Flaubert did a great deal of the real or fundamental brain work for nearly all good narrative writers since his time. He told his stories by a series of precise statements as to what was visible, or what was done in the scene and by his characters. He often told more than the reader of average human laziness could take in effortlessly. He taught Maupassant to write. He wd. send his young friend out in the morning and tell him to come back describing some concierge in such a way that when Flaubert went past that concierge's loge or doorway he wd. know it was that particular concierge and not some other that young Maupassant had seen.

Maupassant wrote mostly short stories, never telling his reader more than the reader cd. lap up at a sitting. Kipling, O. Henry and all good and most successful short story writers since then have merely learned Maupassant's technique, either directly from him or indirectly from his imitators.

Naturally this process in the long run

produced weaker, progressively weaker dilutions.

Joyce, we believe, went back to Papa Flaubert. English prose was mostly very sloppy. In *Dubliners* Joyce tells his stories by definite statement of things visible or things done. Ibsen has told about things felt, things dimly feared; Joyce began to present things felt and feared, but still used hard definite statement.

As Madox Ford had been preaching the virtues of the french prose, of what he called impressionist prose, for some years, and as the Imagist FIRST manifesto had demanded "Direct treatment of the THING whether subjective or objective, and the use of NO WORD that did not contribute to the presentation," a few people recognized the significance of Joyce's first prose book at once.

The question of the fundamental accuracy of statement is the ONE sole morality of writing, as distinct from the morality of ideas discussed in the writing.

Transpose this into science: an honest chemist tells you what is in his test tube whether it stinks or not. His honesty as a chemist consists in putting down the result of his analysis. An honest biologist isn't there to pronounce a favorable verdict on the patient regardless of what he finds by analysis.

A dishonest writer can do just as much harm as a physician who lies about an analysis and lets his patient behave as if that lie were the truth.

This perception of the writer's MORAL duty has been battle ground for nearly a century. Bigots do not like it, cowards do not like it.

The state of Ireland was so bad that they finally had a revolution to escape at least the diseases which they supposed to be due to English rule. Even that hasn't got it into some people's heads that Joyce was being RESPECTABLE and not merely smutty when he reported on Ireland as he did in *Dubliners*, *The Portrait*, and finally the great Gargantuan *Ulysses*.

My disgust with the American postal laws, which give utterly unqualified people right of decision about what books shd. pass through the mails, is no way diminished by the accidental advertisement



given *Ulysses*. *Ulysses* is probably the only new book of any great value that has had the benefit of such unintentional advertising.

The real circulation of a book shd. be counted by the number of UNDERSTANDING readers it attains, not by the number of halfwits who buy it for irrelevant reasons.

In *The Portrait*, Joyce is at the level of Flaubert's *Education* but does not go beyond the Flaubertian field.

*Exiles* is a bad play with a serious content; the effect of Ibsen is everywhere apparent; the play's many excellences are those of a novelist not of a dramatist. It was a necessary step. Joyce had to write something of that kind before he cd. write *Ulysses*.

*Ulysses* (as I have said, vide *The Dial* and *Le Mercure de France*) is a masterpiece, in the line of great unwieldy books, *Gargantua*, and *Don Quixote*. It boils over the general form accepted as the form of the novel. Its immediate forerunner was *Bouvard et Pécuchet*.

Bloom is a better device than Flaubert's two heroes. This also I have indicated (in detail) in the two articles cited. Flaubert's two old buffers go down to the country and discuss and epitomize. Flaubert was digesting the social organism of his time. Bouvard and Pécuchet couldn't have tried canning cutlets in *Gargantua's* day.

The valid parallels for *Ulysses* are with Cervantes' chewing up the Spanish Romances, and with Rabelais' chewing up

<sup>1</sup>A great many people at one time pretended to admire *Don Quixote*, and may indeed have admired it without any inkling of why it produced such an excitement in Spain. It contains long passages of parody, the fun of which is only appreciable by people who know what is being parodied, that is to say a mass of Spanish romances which no one in our time has read save possibly a few professors. University post-grad scholars sometimes learn of the existence of these forgotten books in the footnotes to scholarly editions of *Don Quixote*.

<sup>2</sup>Rabelais' greatness consists largely in that vigour of mind which freed him from stupid respect for stupidity, whether it were the stupidity of mediaeval writers or that sometimes present in the Latin "classics" which were upheld by all the snobism of his time.

scholastic bunk, and the idolatry of written words in his own day. The parallels with the *Odyssey* are mere mechanics, any blockhead can go back and trace them. Joyce had to have a shape on which to order his chaos. This was a convenience, though the abrupt break after the *Telemachiad* (Stephen's chapters) is not particularly felicitous, I mean that to the reader who is really reading *Ulysses* as a book and not as a design or a demonstration or a bit of archaeological research, this chop-off gives no pleasure and has no particular intrinsic merit (tho' it has parallels with musical construction and can be justified by a vast mass of theory).

Parenthesis: Ben Hecht once said, "Anybody can write a short story. All you do is to take a man and a woman, AND bring 'em together." The meeting of father and son can be considered under a similar general equation of form.

Joyce has made, to date, 3 contributions to literature that seem likely to be there for as long as any of the rest of it. His last decade has been devoted to experiment, which probably concerns himself and such groups of writers as think they can learn something from it. It can hardly be claimed that the main design of his later work emerges above the detail. I pointed out, long ago, that the defect of Gongorism was something deeper than excessive ornament, or rather that all sorts of excess in detail can be considered under a general equation with gongorism. Mozart wrote galimatias to amuse his young female cousin.

Mr Jefferson remarked that neologisms were justified when they helped to make clear one's meaning.

Mr Wyndham Lewis' specific criticism of *Ulysses* can now be published. It was made in 1922 or '23. "Ungh!" he grunted, "He [Joyce] don't seem to have any very new point of view about anything." Such things are a matter of degree. There is a time for a man to experiment with his medium. When he has a mastery of it; or when he has developed it, and extended it, he or a successor can apply it.

*Ulysses* is a summary of prewar Europe, the blackness and mess and muddle of a "civilization" led by disguised forces and



a bought press, the general sloppiness, the plight of the individual intelligence in that mess! Bloom very much is the mess.

I think anybody is a fool who does not read *Dubliners*, *The Portrait*, and *Ulysses* for his own pleasure, and—coming back to the present particular and specialized audience—anyone who has not read these three books is unfit to teach literature in any high school or college. I don't mean simply English or American literature but *any* literature, for literature is not split up by political frontiers.

I can not see that Mr. Joyce's later work concerns more than a few specialists, and I can not see in it either a comprehension of, or a very great preoccupation with, the present, which may indicate an obtuseness on my part, or may indicate that Mr. Joyce's present and my present are very different one from the other, and, further, that I can not believe in a passive acceptance.

In judging the modality of another intelligence one possibly errs in supposing that a man whose penetrations and abilities exceed one's own in a given direction shd. at least equal them in some other. In other words, the times we live in seem to me more interesting than the period of what seems to me reminiscence—which (to me) appears to dominate Anna Livia and the rest of the Joycean curley-cues.

I am, at 47, more interested in work built on foundations wherein I have laboured, than in that produced by Mr. J's imitators, and feel that this is justified on human and critical grounds.

Awareness to the present is indisputably part of a great writer's equipment, it is a dimension to be measured, or a component in his specific gravity to be judged and computed, and if you ask me whether I believe that Joyce in 1933 is alive to the world as it is, a world in which technocracy has just knocked out all previous economic computations, and upset practically all calculations save those of C. H. Douglas; a world in which the network of french banks and international munition sellers is just beginning to be expressible on the printed page; in which class-war has been, or is as I write this, simply going out of date, along with the paddle-wheel

steamer, and being replaced by a different lineup or conflict, I must answer that Mr. Joyce seems to me ignorant of, and very little concerned with these matters. Anthony Trollope wd. have been more alert to their bearing.

#### *Joyce's "contribution and influence"*

It is impossible, in the course of a single article, to explain the contribution of a new or comparatively new writer to "people" unless one presupposes that they are to some degree familiar with the preceding history of literature.

Joyce's influence in so far as I consider it sanitary, is almost exclusively Flaubert's influence, extended.

That is to say Flaubert invented a sort of specific for literary diabetes. Injections of this specific into Maupassant and weaker injections into Kipling, Steve Crane, etc., prevented a good deal of diabetes (sugar in the wrong place) but the strength of this curative was weakened by time, or you may say, the "culture" was imperfectly continued.

Joyce got some of the real stuff, full strength, or in words already used: Wrote English as clean and hard as Flaubert's french.

This, plus Madox Ford's criticism and practice, plus the effect of a movement for the non-soppy writing of poetry, influenced let us say the early Hemingway and all of McAlmon, and via McAlmon has affected beneficently a whole group of younger writers.

Apart from his ambition for the perfect "form," Henry James set out to enrich the *content* of the novel. The Goncourt had complained that "realism" cd. deal with low life, and expressed a hope that it wd. in time be able to deal with more complicated and elaborate mentalities. This job James undertook, with various results which lie outside the scope of our present essay. Even when Joyce introduces theology and complicated *ideas* he is not preoccupied either with the amenities of certain highly specialized or etiolated social groups of society, nor very much with manners as a fine art. Proust continued James' "line."

Criticism is not limited to saying that

certain things are good or bad, but has also the function of sorting out and dissociating DIFFERENT kinds of endeavor. The criterion for a peach or a bull dog is not the criterion for an apple or a spaniel.

The later influence of Joyce has not been useful. This is no FAULT of Joyce's. It is perfectly permissible for a good physician to introduce a new and effective method into an hospital regardless of its being or not being his own invention. He may then retire to his laboratory and conduct research with whatever hope he can maintain in further progress. If some student runs off with the test tubes before the researcher has finished his work, and tries to use whatever is then in them as a specific against, say, consumption, you can not hold the researcher responsible.

As for further details of my ideas re/ the relation of *Ulysses* to Flaubert's unfinished *Bouvard and Pecuchet*, I explained my view in both the *Dial* and the *Mercure de France* over a decade ago. I can not see any way of abbreviating what I then said. Without reading both books, the teacher can not be expected to understand their relations. It wd. be impossible to explain the working of a taxi engine to a student who refused to learn the simple bases of physics (whether they were called that or not, and irrespective of whether he read 'em in a textbook or was told 'em in a garage).

I have simplified the concept of world literature to the best of my ability in *How To Read*.

The only way for an instructor adequately to know Joyce's "position" is to know more or less the state of human knowledge with regard to writing NOVELS before 1912; to know who were the great inventors and great performers and then to locate Joyce's work in relation to these known phenomena.

Unless the words Flaubert, Ibsen, Henry James have specific meanings for the reader no essayist however patient can explain Joyce's relation to them, or anyone's relations to them, without at least writing three other essays, one on each of these writers, and probably another ten on their forebears, in fact, without doing a complete history of the novel. Once and for all the reader can dismiss the idea that he can solidly KNOW anything about ANY literary term or performance if his knowledge is limited to one language. This is more obviously impossible in a case where a writer's greatest admirations are books written in alien tongues, or when his modes of thought have been fostered by say french and latin of various epochs and not (in Joyce's case emphatically NOT) by the sort of sloppy writing that was accepted in England in the latter XIXth century and early XXth.

On the other hand, a reader who has from whatever source attained sound criteria of excellence can approximately judge the excellence of a book in so far as that book does not exceed the varieties of excellence that he has been taught to look for.

## 1941: FAULKNER'S POINT OF VIEW

WARREN BECK

Criticism of William Faulkner's novels has diverged conspicuously between two tendencies. Some of the most discerning have praised Faulkner highly; for instance, six years ago Mark Van Doren spoke of his possessing "one of the greatest natural gifts to be found anywhere in America," and Conrad Aiken's recent article in the *Atlantic* was on the whole constructively appreciative. Even Henry Seidel Canby, after having written of *Sanctuary* that it

showed "no concern for significance," "no predilection for 'ought,'" came around two years later to say of *Light in August*, "It is a novel of extraordinary force and insight . . . and filled with that spirit of compassion which saves those who look at life too closely from hardness and despair. . . . I think that no one can deny it the praise of life caught in its intensities both good and bad." Yet much journalistic criticism of Faulkner has continued to

be detractory, sometimes even abusive; and such is almost always the tone toward him in those volumes on contemporary fiction which American professors write for their students and for one another.

This failure of much American criticism properly to evaluate and support the novels of William Faulkner seems based chiefly on two erroneous propositions—first, that Faulkner has no ideas, no point of view, and, second, that consequently he is melodramatic, a mere sensationalist. One academic critic has called his work the *reductio ad absurdum* of American naturalism and complains that there is “no cosmic echo . . . behind his atrocities”; another calls Faulkner’s profound masterpiece *Absalom, Absalom!* disappointing, in that it presents “an experience of limited value”; another says Faulkner “is not a novelist of ideas but of mood and action, physical and psychic”—as though mood and action were antithetical to ideas, instead of their legitimate artistic media in fiction. Of Faulkner’s whole work a dogmatic sectarian critic (who within three pages makes four mistakes of fact about the stories) says that “to read these books is to cross a desert of terrifying nihilism” and accuses Faulkner of almost mathematically computing a maximum of shock. Another, characterizing *Light in August* as “murder and rape turning on the spit over the flames of arson,” says that in this book “nothing is omitted, except virtue.”

One of the most recent insults to Faulkner’s artistic integrity is Burton Rascoe’s suggestion that he plays with his material and his readers, that he writes with his tongue in his cheek. Following the vogue of denying Faulkner any philosophic outlook and purpose, another academician accuses him of “the calculated manufacture of superfluous horrors.” “He is a belated literary descendent of Edgar Allan Poe,” writes one of the professors, in a favorite and utterly false correlation. “He works like Poe,” says another, “to freeze the reader’s blood”; still another says, “He stresses the grotesque and horrible to the point where they become simply ludicrous.” Taking up where the pedagogues leave off, one leading periodical reviewer hurls the epithet “Mississippi Frankenstein”;

another, in a title, sums up Faulkner’s achievement as “witchcraft.”

Perhaps the most obvious of these errors is the comparison to Poe. The association of ideas is typical of these critic’s superficiality; Poe deals in horror, Faulkner presents horror—therefore Faulkner is like Poe. Horror is of different kinds, however. The essence of Poe’s frightful fiction is unreality, product of a morbid taste for pre-arranged nightmares and self-induced hallucinations, that narcissism of the imagination which is the seamy side of romanticism. Faulkner, on the other hand, is a brilliant realist. In Poe’s most typical stories there is little evidence that he studied other human beings, but it seems certain that Faulkner, like his character Gavin Stevens the attorney, might have been seen “squatting among the overalls on the porches of country stores for a whole summer afternoon, talking to them in their own idiom about nothing at all.”

Indeed, if Faulkner in all his work does not have his eye studiously on the object, a locale and its *dramatis personae*, his has been a very foresighted piece of fabrication, for *The Hamlet*, published in 1940 but telling a story of the 1890’s, is glanced back at in its details in *As I Lay Dying* (1930) and in *Sanctuary* (1931), and there are many other systematic connections back and forth between the novels, especially in reference to the tribes of Sartoris, Compson, Sutpen, and Snopes. On the map of Yoknapatawpha County appended to *Absalom, Absalom!* Faulkner writes himself down as “sole owner and proprietor,” but this community centering in Jefferson either has more than a coincidental resemblance, however synthetic, to real Mississippians white, black, and brown, or else William Faulkner is running both God and the devil a close second as a creator and confounder of human beings. Unmistakably, whatever horror there is in Faulkner—and there is a great deal—is out of life.

It may be the very brilliance of Faulkner’s realism that has confused others of the critics; details may have so startled them that they have missed the subtle implications of idea in the novels. Certainly the implications are there. While Faulkner differs radically from Poe in being a close

observer and realistic reporter of the human tragedy, he departs just as radically from the naturalistic school's baldly objective, documentary method. He is constantly interpretive; he sees his subjects in the light of humane predilections, and thus his realism always intends signification. This lifts his most extreme passages above sensationalism; and striking as his scenes are, his conception of novels as meaningful wholes is still more impressive, at least for qualified attentive readers.

Faulkner's interpretive bent has also led him to transcend the modern realists' cult of a simply factual diction and colloquial construction and to employ instead a full, varied, and individual style. Perhaps, too, some of the unappreciative critics may have evaded the challenge of this style, with its overtone, ellipsis, and suspension, and so may have missed Faulkner's themes in somewhat the way of a high-school student reading *Hamlet* only as a melodramatic series of murders. However, the widely proclaimed frustrations over Faulkner's style, like the revulsions against his realism, will be dispelled once his point of view is grasped, for this style is a powerful instrument handled for the most part with great skill for the realization of his ideas.

William Faulkner's view of human life is one of the most pessimistic ever voiced in fiction, and his writing, like Mr. Compson's "sloped whimsical ironic hand out of Mississippi attenuated," is of predominantly melancholy tone. "All breath," he says in *The Wild Palms*, has as its only immortality, "its infinite capacity for folly and pain." Not often, however, does Faulkner speak in his own right, out of the omniscience of third-person narrative, for he is devoted to dramatic form and to the perspective it supplies, and most of his stories are told largely through the consciousness of participant characters. And even when Faulkner himself speaks, through third-person narrative, he usually keys his utterance to the mood of the scene and makes himself the lyrical mouthpiece of his character's experiences. Consequently, it is not possible to comprehend Faulkner's point of view from separate quotations but only from implications in his novels as wholes

and from the positions of his various characters in relation to these implied themes.

His critics have sometimes failed to make the necessary distinction between the statements of his dramatic characters and his own ideas. The words of Mr. Compson, "history is an allusion of philosophers and fools," are shoved back into Faulkner's own mouth by one recent critic and are made basis for asserting that Faulkner never transcends the level of bare perception but sees the universe as "bereft of authentic proprieties and the accents of logic," when certainly his keen sense of authentic proprieties and the accents of logic is part of Faulkner's artistic inspiration—a central part of that superhuman unrest in him which has produced so prolifically and so passionately.

Undoubtedly Faulkner, like any other novelist or dramatist, stands behind some of his characters, but which are his spokesmen cannot be decided except in terms of the preponderance and system of his ideas. Therefore it should be noted, for example, that in *Mosquitoes* it is not Faulkner but the flippant Semitic who declares that man's tendency to follow illusions to his death must be "some grand cosmic scheme for fertilizing the earth"; it is an ignorant, bitter man crazed by greed for supposed treasure—Armistid in *The Hamlet*—whom the author describes as digging himself "back into that earth which had produced him to be its born and fated thrall forever until he died"; and it is a man heartbroken by his wife's death—Houston in *The Hamlet*—who felt himself "victim of a useless and elaborate practical joke at the hands of the prime maniacal Risibility."

Even Faulkner's dramatization of such negative characters need not mislead the critic if he contemplates such portraits in their entirety—Houston's disenchantment, for instance, does not include a surrender to apathy, for he not only viewed the idiot Ike Snopes at his worst with "furious exasperation which was not rage but savage contempt and pity for all blind flesh capable of hope and grief," but he gave the poor fellow what help he could. Thus the reporter in *Pylon* says you "walk the earth with your arm crooked over your head to dodge until you finally get the old black-jack at last and can lay back down again,"

but in spite of that despairing view he is sympathetic and aggressively philanthropic.

Pity is significantly a common emotion among Faulkner's characters. The old justice who appears incidentally but vividly in the closing pages of *The Hamlet* looks at Mrs. Armistead, the victim of her husband's stubborn folly and Flem Snopes's rapacity, "with pity and grief." Hightower, in *Light in August*, murmurs "Poor man. Poor man-kind," and his words encompass not only the negro murderer but his victim and the people who now pursue him. Such humane sensitivity is epitomized when Faulkner calls the reporter in *Pylon* "patron (even if no guardian) saint of all waifs, all the homeless the desperate and the starved," and describes him as manifesting "that air of worn and dreamy fury which Don Quixote must have had."

In many of Faulkner's stories there is the compassionate troubled observer—Quentin Compson in *The Sound and the Fury* and in *Absalom, Absalom!*, a whole chorus of country folk one by one in *As I Lay Dying*, Benbow in *Sanctuary*, Hightower in *Light in August*, the reporter in *Pylon*, and Ratliff in *The Hamlet*. In *The Unvanquished*, Bayard Sartoris, while closely involved in the action, also evolves into a typical Faulknerian observer as he matures. It is no doubt significant of Faulkner's own attitude that these compassionate observers so largely provide the reflective point of view from which the story is told and thereby determine its moral atmosphere. This typical technique is in itself refutation of the charge that Faulkner is nihilistic and merely sensational. Indeed, it shows that the intention of Faulkner's temperament is idealistic, while its awareness of the preponderant realities of human behavior is pessimistic, and hence its conviction is a melancholy which recoils in protest. This protest is, of course, not didactic but rather inheres in an implicative tone, which the imaginative reader will not miss and will respect for its art as well as its idealism.

The skeptical may test this thesis fairly by re-reading *Sanctuary* (not the most skillful or organic of Faulkner's narratives) with attention fixed primarily on Horace Benbow. His unrest amid hypocrisies and viciousness and his fanatical resistance

suffice to throw the events of the book into their true ethical perspective. Faulkner's exuberant and as yet undisciplined realism at times carried him into digression, as with Virgil and Fonzo at Madame Reba's house, or Red's riotous funeral, or the unassimilated and hence anticlimactic documentary chapter on Popeye's youth; however behind the main events of the plot is the brooding corrective spirit of the perfectionist Benbow, bringing the rich imagery and profusion of fact into harmony with the dire theme. And what Faulkner achieves not without extravagances in *Sanctuary* can be found done better in *Light in August* and done to perfection in *Absalom, Absalom!*

Naturally revulsion often carries these compassionate observers into aloofness. The clergyman Hightower, perhaps the most broadly sympathetic of all, is also the most detached. Deprived of his pulpit because of his wife's scandalous behavior, he has lived alone and inactive for years; and when he hears that the posse is about to catch Joe Christmas, he refuses to be involved, saying to himself, "I won't! I won't! I have bought immunity. I have paid." Later when Byron Bunch comes to him with Lena's troubles and those of Mrs. Hines and Joe, the tears run down his cheeks like sweat as he says, "But it is not right to bother me, to worry me, when I have—when I have taught myself to stay—have been taught by them to stay—That this should come to me, taking me after I am old." Quentin Compson's revulsion is still more acute, for he is more severely involved through his sister's disgrace, and he retreats all the way into self-annihilation. Even the quizzical self-possessed Ratliff, in *The Hamlet*, pauses somewhere between despair and defiance to thank God "men have done learned how to forget quick what they ain't brave enough to try to cure." Benbow makes a more direct and moodier self-accusation—"I lack courage: that was left out of me. The machinery is all here, but it won't run." And Ratliff, after stepping in several times on the side of the angels, cries out to a companion, "I could do more, but I won't. I won't, I tell you!"

These retreats are not repudiations of principle; they are simply a natural human



weakness and weariness, which Faulkner represents dramatically for purposes of characterization, and which serve also the artistic method of vicissitude. It is significant that the pendulum of mood usually swings back to positive assertion; Hightower and Benbow and the reporter, for instance, return again and again to the struggle. Even the crazed Quentin Compson realizes that beyond despair is something still more intolerable—indifference; he says, "It's not when you realize that nothing can help you—religion, pride, anything—it's when you realize that you don't need any aid." Benbow, oppressed by "the evil, the injustice, the tears," lets himself think it might be better if Goodwin, the woman and her child, Popeye, and he himself too were all dead, "cauterized out of the old and tragic flank of the world," and goes on to imagine "perhaps it is upon the instant that we realize, admit that there is a logical pattern to evil, that we die"; but he does not cease to postulate and appeal to a logical pattern of good in his efforts to save a falsely accused man and to befriend that man's family. Quentin Compson is obsessed by his father's teaching that "all men are just accumulations dolls stuffed with sawdust swept up from the trash heaps where all previous dolls had been thrown away the sawdust flowing from what wound in what side that not for me died not," but nevertheless he cannot accept his father's argument that virginity is just words.

These characters' refusal to surrender principle even when they seem overwhelmed by circumstance not only intensifies their melancholy, and Faulkner's, but enhances it with human dignity. Indeed, in the darkest pages of these novels Faulkner and his compassionate spectators often exemplify Carlyle's dictum that a man's sorrow is the inverted image of his nobility. The reporter in *Pylon* tells his editor that he tried to let the fliers alone but couldn't—couldn't refrain, that is, from the impulse to help them, in spite of their desperate state beyond his help, and his own acknowledged awkwardness. Benbow says he "cannot stand idly by and see injustice," and when Miss Jenny suggests Pilate's cynical query, Benbow declares

himself still moved to oppose what he identifies as "that irony which lurks in events." When Goodwin's woman assumes that she must give herself to Benbow in lieu of cash payment for his legal services, he says, "Can't you see that perhaps a man might do something just because he knew it was right, necessary to the harmony of things that it be done?" Ratliff similarly asserts that in opposing the Snopes clan he was "protecting something that don't want nothing but to walk and feel the sun and wouldn't know how to hurt no man even if it would and wouldn't want to even if it could, just like I wouldn't stand by and see you steal a meat-bone from a dog."

Even the skeptical Mr. Compson often shows awareness that the moral issue is not figmentary. He sees human virtue manifested sometimes in acts of apparent evil—"Have you noticed," he asks Quentin, "how so often when we try to reconstruct the causes which lead up to the actions of men and women, how with a sort of astonishment we find ourselves now and then reduced to the belief, the only possible belief, that they stemmed from some of the old virtues? the thief who steals not for greed but for love, the murderer who kills not out of lust but pity?" Thus the man whose motives the Compsons try to reconstruct—Thomas Sutpen—is driven on in his acquisitiveness, they find, by a boyhood complex of honor; and even in his materialistic pride he holds himself to a code which will not let him traduce the wife who deceived him. The persistence of such moral resolution in Faulkner's beset and melancholy characters is typified in Judith Sutpen's feeling that "it can't matter. . . and yet it must matter because you keep on trying."

Closely related to this attitude, and furnishing another fixed point in the ethics of Faulkner's characters, is an idealization of honesty. The aristocratic Rosa Millard, in *The Unvanquished*, never whipped her grandson for anything but lying and prayed for pardon for herself after she had lied to a Yankee officer to protect her family; later, having obtained mules by forged requisitions upon Union troops and having sold them back to other Union troops for gold, she confesses before the congregation,

asks their prayers, and then distributes the money among them as she had intended. When at last she is murdered by carpet-baggers, the negro boy Ringo says discerningly of her, "It wasn't him or Ab Snopes either that kilt her. It was them mules. That first batch of mules we got for nothing." Nor is this integrity represented as limited to the aristocrats of the Old South. Addie Bundren, the country woman, believed "deceit was such that, in a world where it was, nothing else could be very bad or very important." Her carpenter son Cash holds to what he calls "the olden right teaching that says to drive the nails down and trim the edges well always like it was for your own use and comfort you were making it," and so great is his passion for rightness that when asked how far he fell when he broke his leg, he answers, "Twenty-eight foot, four and a half inches, about." Relevantly, honest Cash is the Bundren who judges most fairly the erratic brother Darl, crediting his motives even while condemning his acts. Byron Bunch is another honest workman; he keeps his own time strictly when he works alone at the mill, and he says, "It beats all how some folks think that making or getting money is a kind of game where there are not any rules at all." No wonder that, when Hightower hears Byron's class disdainfully called "hillbillies," he says, "They are fine people, though. Fine men and women." Another example is in *The Wild Palms*; the lost convict has the woman wash his prison suit, while he goes bare-backed in the blistering sun; then he wraps up the clean suit saving it for his return; and Faulkner himself remarks that the woman said nothing, "since she too doubtless knew what his reason was. . . she too had stemmed at some point from the same dim hill-bred Abraham."

Often the unassuming virtue of simple people provides the foil to evil and furnishes the atmospheric tension in Faulkner's scenes, as, for instance, an incidental character in *The Hamlet*, a farmer whose gentility is symbolized by the spray of peach blossoms he holds in his teeth, who plows the Armstid field so that Mrs. Armstid won't be forced to do it but who will not answer when Ratliff asks

how many hours he has put in for his neighbor, this detail pointing up Henry Armstid's brutality to his wife and Flem Snopes's ruthless seizure of the five dollars she had earned weaving. In the same way the professional integrity and chivalry of the flier Roger Shumann, in *Pylon*, contrasts with the commercial trickery and inhumanity of the airport promoters. Thus Faulkner furnishes frames of moral reference, not only by suggesting ideals through his repellent pictures of their opposites but by showing protagonists of them among all sorts of men and women.

And thus Faulkner's deep pessimism does not proceed from a denial of values but from a melancholy recognition of the great weight of evil opposition to very real values. Not much can be done for the Mrs. Armstids in a community overrun by rapacious Snopeses, nor can Benbow effectually help Goodwin and his woman against Popeye's viciousness, Temple's treachery and the mob's intolerance and brutality. Thus when Faulkner's compassionate observers actually intervene, they are quite often defeated. Byron Bunch is the most successful of them all, and that perhaps because he largely shifts to Hightower the paralyzing contemplative function and himself seeks simply to protect and cherish the abandoned Lena and her child. Lena is a still simpler character, representing the will to life in an elementary human form, and she passes through Jefferson at the time of Miss Burden's murder and the mobbing of Joe Christmas as untouched and unperturbed as Eck Snopes's little boy among the wild horses that injured grown men. Most of Faulkner's characters are more complex and less stable than Lena; they are far gone in all sorts of involvements, either with others or with their own fantasies. Hence conflict and impasse in lives where suffering prevails and succor is difficult.

Under the resultant emotional strain Faulkner's characters sometimes attribute malevolence to the cosmos, but they more often see men themselves as the direct agents of evil. The whole theme of Faulkner's early work, *Mosquitoes*, seems to be that humans pester one another insufferably by passionate encroachments of one egotism

upon another. Seeing these aggressive tendencies accumulated in social pressures, Wilbourne, the lover in *The Wild Palms*, who attempts with Charlotte to escape out of the world, thinks "you are born submerged in anonymous lockstep with the teeming anonymous myriads of your time and generation; you get out of step once, falter once, and you are trampled to death." And the ironic repercussions of consequence are inevitable. In *Sanctuary* young Gowan Stevens says he has injured no one but himself by his folly, whereas his drunken blundering had actually set into motion the whole chain of events that brought, besides Temple's debauchment, the deaths of Tommy, Red, and Goodwin. Hightower thinks "it is any man's privilege to destroy himself, so long as he does not injure any one else," but then almost at once he realizes that his ego had been the instrument of his wife's despair and shame.

When the parachute jumper in *Pylon* tells the reporter goodbye, he thanks him for "trying to help," but he advises, "Stick to the kind of people you are used to after this." That, however, is difficult counsel, not only for the reporter, but for most of Faulkner's characters. They are not used to one another, never become used to one another; they are as Addie Bundren sees human beings, "each with his and her secret and selfish thought, and blood strange to each other blood." A key to the enigma of this separation may be found in a bit of omniscient narrative where Faulkner says, "Man knows so little about his fellows. In his eyes all men or women act upon what he believes would motivate him if he were mad enough to do what that other man or woman is doing." *If he were mad enough.* To the spectator, mankind seems predominantly irrational. This does not mean that Faulkner himself repudiates rationality; he seems rather to hold with the judge, in the short story "Beyond," who says he cannot divorce himself from reason enough to accept the pleasant and labor-saving theory of nihilism.

Faulkner's own inclination is shown by his endowing his most positive characters, his observers, with two primary elements of rationality—inquiry and disinterestedness

—and with the reasonable man's idealization of justice. Yet in the whole body of Faulkner's work the results thus far of men's struggles toward rational self-control and social adjustment are not shown to be encouraging. The rector in *Soldiers' Pay* is convinced that man learns scarcely anything as he goes through this world and nothing whatever of help or benefit. The open conflict between human passions and rationality, and, alternatively, the unsatisfactory compromises of that conflict in woodenly conventional restraints, create the paradoxes so poignantly dramatized in Faulkner's most abstractly symbolic story, *The Wild Palms*. Wilbourne repudiates man's self-imposed systems and tries to live all for love; the convict, swept away on the flooded river, laboriously returns himself, the woman he had been told to rescue, and even the boat he was sent in; both men get prison sentences. The ironic dissonances of this somber novel, its dilemmas of escape and surrender, love and suffering, freedom and fate, and basically of reason and passion, give an incomparable suggestion of the confused and turbulent life of man in his present stage of imperfect mental and moral development.

Tull, in *As I Lay Dying*, suggests a severe functional limitation of the human brain. "It's like a piece of machinery: it won't stand a whole lot of racking." Perhaps Faulkner's frequent inclusion of feeble-minded characters is the result not only of their horrid fascination for his own acutely sensitive and subtle consciousness, but also to emphasize the precariousness and difficulty of rationality, the resemblance of the supposedly sane and the insane, and the short distance thus far traveled in the evolution of mind. The idiot, in the cow-stealing episode in *The Hamlet*, is described as one who "is learning fast now, who has learned success and then precaution and secrecy and how to steal and even providence; who has only lust and greed and bloodthirst and a moral conscience to keep him awake at night, yet to acquire." Thus far human rationality is not strong enough to rule out lust, greed, and bloodthirst; it can only recoil at them, usually after indulging them. And Cash suggests that there is little distinction between the

various stages of supposed rationality in man: "I ain't so sho that ere a man has the right to say what is crazy and what aint. It's like there was a fellow in every man that's done a-past the sanity or the insanity, that watches the sane and the insane doings of that man with the same horror and the same astonishment."

There may be no such detached and perceptive fellow in every man, or even in most men; but there is such a fellow in William Faulkner, and all his works show his horror and astonishment, proceeding from an exacting and outraged idealism. Faulkner's integrity is all the more obvious in that his is an advanced outpost's stand against odds, the odds of the predominance of base passions over supposed rationality and their resultant confusions in the average man. The desperateness of the issue, as he pictures it, is what gives his books their startling intensity, unequaled in our contemporary fiction. Faulkner's own extreme mood, growing out of his absolute demands, has been so powerfully communicated that reading him is like an actual experience of catastrophe—not only the "lightning and tempest, battle, murder, and sudden death" from which all men would be delivered, but, what is still more terrifying, "all inordinate and sinful affections."

His is, indeed, an apocalyptic vision of sin and of its complex consequences. He is unsurpassed in recording those spasms of greed and lustfulness and animosity that eclipse human qualities and saddle men with fixations which are not so much ideas as appetites. He has epitomized such crises in his record of Jiggs, the mechanic in *Pylon*, as he goes on drinking: "He could have heard sounds, even voices, from the alley beneath the window if he had been

listening. But he was not. All he heard now was that thunderous silence and solitude in which man's spirit crosses the eternal repetitive rubicon of his vice in the instant after the terror and before the triumph becomes dismay—the moral and spiritual waif shrieking his feeble I-am-I into the desert of chance and disaster." Faulkner can picture as well the despair of the rational and well-intentioned when they contemplate uncontrollable suffusions of passion in others and oppose their results. Such, on a broad narrative scale, is Ratliff confronting Snopes, Benbow maneuvering against Popeye and the townspeople, Bayard Sartoris resisting his father and Drusilla, and Quentin Compson viewing his family in *The Sound and the Fury* and the South's evil genius in *Absalom, Absalom!*

Those who lack Faulkner's knowledge of good and evil, or lack his courage in facing knowledge, may shut their eyes and put their hands over their ears while they gibber about Frankenstein or nihilism. Such ostrich tactics become increasingly ridiculous in a world where a recrudescence of irrationality and brutal passions have pointed up for even the most imperceptive those melancholy facts about human nature and progress which Faulkner has confronted all along and has unequivocally attacked. A virile critical approach will first recognize the coherent rationality and humanity of Faulkner's point of view, and might then profitably go on to its particular sources, in Faulkner's own experience and in his contemplation of his native South, past and present, and so might finally come to a reappraisal of his narrative techniques, so brilliantly adapted to his profound artistic visions.

#### 1944: THE GENERATION THAT WASN'T LOST

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For at least a dozen years American literature has been dominated by the generation that came of age during or shortly after the first World War. This is especially true in the field of fiction. The men whose new books have been eagerly anticipated, reviewed at length, and discussed

in the scholarly journals are Hemingway (born in 1898), Dos Passos (1896), Fitzgerald (1896), Faulkner (1897), and Wolfe (1900). Each of these has been widely imitated—not excepting Fitzgerald, who, in his last years, was somewhat less prominent than the others; nevertheless, he

fathered the school of social historians that is best represented today by John O'Hara, and his books are being read by young men in the army. As for Hemingway, his influence is so pervasive in recent fiction that critics hardly bother to mention it any more.

The new writers who have come forward to join this group—at least in the public mind—are principally John Steinbeck (born in 1902), Erskine Caldwell (1903), Kay Boyle (1903), James T. Farrell (1904), Katherine Anne Porter (1894), and John P. Marquand (born in 1893, although his first serious novel, *The Late George Apley*, was not published until 1937). Marquand stands somewhat apart from the others, partly because he is a little older and left college at a time when a year or two made a vast difference in people's thinking and partly because he is the only popular satirist among the writers I have mentioned. Farrell also stands apart, not only because he is younger but also because he is the only consistent naturalist.

The others had more experiences in common than any other generation of writers in American history. All of them were shaken loose from their moorings by the First World War, even if they were too young to serve in the Army. All were given a new perspective on their native backgrounds. All traveled widely during the years when travel was cheap. All began writing at a time when it was easy for new men to be published and even to earn a living from their books. Gertrude Stein said to Hemingway, "You are all a lost generation," and there was truth in her remark so long as it was taken in a moral sense: these writers had no home except in the past, no fixed standards, and, in many cases, no sense of direction. Materially, however, they were much more fortunate than their successors. The young writers of the depression years were so busy earning a living that most of them had no time for the luxuries of spiritual grief and confusion.

I want to describe some of the qualities possessed in common by the writers of what used to be called the lost generation; for a time these came to be regarded as the qualities of American fiction in

general. I also want to ask which of them are likely to be permanent, being part of the national character as revealed in literature, and which of them were the results of a temporary situation. My intention is to write what might be called a business article, concerned strictly with ideas and tendencies; ornaments of style would be out of place, and there is little room for documentation.

American fiction between the two wars was not on the surface a literature of ideas, but that wasn't because the novelists did no thinking. Most of them regarded fiction as an art in which ideas could be expressed only in terms of mood or action. People in American novels seldom read books and almost never talked about them, as O. H. Cheney complained when he made a survey of the publishing trade in 1930; he thought that authors were missing an opportunity for proliterary propaganda. On the other hand, many of their characters sounded like people who, at some time in the past, had done a great deal of reading and thinking. Even John Steinbeck's Okies talked as if they had read both *Sanctuary* and *Tobacco Road*.

One of the best places to look for guiding ideas is in the earliest book of each novelist—for example, Dos Passos stated his own ideas most clearly in *One Man's Initiation*, written when he was twenty-two and almost valueless as a novel. Fitzgerald's picture of the world comes out most clearly in *This Side of Paradise*, published when he was twenty-four. Hemingway's picture is also clear in his first volume of stories, *In Our Time*, but his best discussions of writing are the dialogues with the Peter Arno-ish old lady in *Death in the Afternoon*. For Wolfe, of course, there is *The Story of a Novel*. Faulkner, who has never been adequately treated by the critics, has for years been shaping a legend of the South as it is stated allegorically in *Sanctuary* and implicitly in *Absalom, Absalom!* but its first direct statement was the second part of *The Bear*, a long story included in the volume called *Go Down, Moses* (1942). All these are helpful sources.



The novelists of the inter-war generation might be characterized by six adjectives. They are *international* in their interests, technically *expert*, lyrical rather than naturalistic, *rebellious* but not revolutionary, progressively *disillusioned* and *passive* rather than active in their mood. Each of these adjectives needs to be explained at some length.

1. Most of these writers became interested in foreign life and letters while they were still in college, largely as a reaction against the provincial dullness of their own backgrounds. When the war came many of them chose to serve in foreign armies—Faulkner with the Royal Air Force; Dos Passos and Hemingway with both the French and the Italians. In general they liked what they saw of European life. Tom Randolph, one of the two principal characters in *One Man's Initiation*, says:

I used to think that down home was the only place they knew how to live, but oh boy . . . After the war, Howe, ole man, let's riot all over Europe; I'm getting a taste for this sort of livin'.

After the war there were thousands of young Americans who planned to riot all over Europe. The best of them did more than riot: they wrote painstakingly and studied the literature and social customs of the new countries where they lived. They were the greatest travelers in American literary history except Burton Holmes. In 1936 Dos Passos published a book called *In All Countries*; the title was scarcely an exaggeration. It was not until he was in his forties that he settled down in two homes—one in Virginia, the other on Cape Cod; his latest magazine assignment has been a tour of the United States in wartime. Only one of Hemingway's four novels—and the weakest of them—has an American background. The book is *To Have and Have Not*; the setting is an island off our southernmost shore. Even Thomas Wolfe, who was trying to express the immensity of his own country, took ship for Europe at every chance. Until 1936 he felt more at home in Munich than he did in Asheville, North Carolina.

And there is another point to make in

this connection. Not only were many novels by members of this generation international in spirit or subject matter; they also found an international audience. It might be more accurate to say that each of them found a separate audience. Hemingway was widely copied in England, Wolfe became a hero among German students, and Faulkner had more prestige in France than in Mississippi. The Russian favorites were at first Dos Passos—one of whose plays, *Fortune Heights*, was performed in two Moscow theaters simultaneously, although it never reached Broadway—and afterward Hemingway, whom many young Russian writers tried to imitate. They said—and the younger critics in Western Europe agreed with them—that American literature had become more varied and forceful than that of any older nation. They also said that it was more interesting from the technical point of view.

2. Our novelists of the inter-war generation had been making dozens of technical experiments—for example, Hemingway's dialogues with their short, repetitive sentences, Dos Passos' Newsreels and Camera Eye (in *U.S.A.*), Wolfe's dithyrambs to the American landscape and Faulkner's interior monologues that run on for page after page with the normal quantity of commas and dashes and occasional paragraphs, but never a period. These experiments seemed to be conducted with many purposes in view, including the simple love of making experiments. It soon became evident, however, that most of them were leading in the same direction. Most of the younger novelists (except Wolfe, Faulkner, and their disciples) were trying to functionalize American fiction. They were trying to strip it of ornaments and of every quality not strictly essential to the business of creating an atmosphere and telling a story.

They omitted adjectives wherever possible. They omitted all details that could be taken for granted. They omitted moral comments on the characters, even when they were wicked, and philosophical comments on the outcome of the story. They omitted ideas in general, as having no place in fiction except implicitly: the reader was

expected to draw his own conclusions. They omitted the phrases used by right-thinking people. Hemingway said in a famous passage of *A Farewell to Arms*:

I was always embarrassed by the words sacred, glorious, and sacrifice and the expression in vain. . . . Abstract words such as glory, honor, courage or hallow were obscene beside the concrete names of villages, the numbers of roads, the names of rivers, the numbers of regiments and the dates.

Good fiction in the inter-war period was concrete; it was also modest in its pretensions. The novelist no longer claimed to be an angel with X-ray vision able to read people's secret thoughts; he was simply an eye and an ear, or rather he was his hero's eye and ear. As for the other characters, he recorded what they said, how they looked, and what they did, leaving the reader to deduce their feelings from their usually stiff and reticent gestures. That was the new method, and, when successful, it made most novels of the pre-war period seem as old-fashioned as Clyde Fitch melodramas.

3. At first this method was confused with naturalism of the Zola school, especially because the inter-war novelists chose to deal, like Zola, with subjects that weren't discussed in good society. Hemingway sometimes said that his chief task in writing a story was to "make it true," and this sounded as if he were attempting a simple transcription of reality. In practice, however, he tried to do something much more complicated: he seemed to regard his stories as machines for arousing the same emotions in the reader that the original experience had aroused in the writer. If the details were carefully selected to produce this result, the story was "true."

Hemingway made another remark about writing that explains the method he followed (at least until 1935). He said at the end of *Death in the Afternoon*: "Let those who want to [do so] change the world, if you can get to see it clear and as a whole. Then any part you make will represent the whole if it's truly made." Most novelists of his school preferred to treat small parts of the world with which they were thoroughly familiar (Dos Passos and Wolfe were two of those

who attempted larger subjects). The others confined themselves to smaller incidents but tried to give them a universal meaning not only by simple parallelism (i.e., "This is how things are in Oxford, Mississippi, and therefore they can't be much different in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, or other parts of the South") but also by suggesting that their characters and incidents were symbolic.

Take, for example, Hemingway's three major novels. If you reverse the order of the first two, putting *A Farewell to Arms* before *The Sun Also Rises*, where it belongs by virtue of the events it deals with, they become a three-part symphony. The program notes would describe it something like this: "Part I: Loss of faith. Isolation. Part II: Wanderings in limbo. Part III: Death and resurrection." As for William Faulkner—to mention one other example among many—the majority of his novels purport to deal with a single county in Mississippi, having an area of 2,400 square miles and a population of 15,611, but they also present a tragic legend of the whole South. That explains why their emotional violence often seems out of proportion to the smaller events in the foreground.

But, although many novels of the inter-war generation are both symbolic and behavioristic, a better word to describe them is "lyrical." The final effect they leave with the reader is one of personal emotion. This is true of Hemingway, with his loneliness and his preoccupation with death; it is true of Faulkner, with his sense of utter catastrophe; it is true of Wolfe, the young man confronting life; and of Fitzgerald lamenting the glamor of the jazz age. It is even true of Dos Passos in *U.S.A.*, although the book starts out to be an objective picture of American society as a whole. From the first, however, you note the intrusions of the Camera Eye, which is not in the least photographic; and the last volume of the novel presents a picture of social disintegration that is powerful largely because it is subjective; it is Dos Passos singing a tragic threnody.

4. The novelists of the inter-war generation were rebels even before they were

graduated from high school. At first they rebelled against the hypocrisy of their readers and against the gentility of American letters. Next they rebelled against the noble phrases that justified the slaughter of millions in the First World War (although not one of them was in any real sense a pacifist). They rebelled against the philistinism and the scramble for money of the Harding days, just as they would later rebel against the illogic of the depression. They formed a persistent opposition, a minority never in power and never even organized. Except for a few years during the middle 1930's, at the time of the Spanish civil war, they preferred to live and write each man for himself.

And their rebellion, besides being individual and largely unpolitical, was also essentially conservative. They didn't look forward, really, to a new collective society based on the intelligent use of machines; that would be the last thing they wanted. Their almost subconscious ideal was the more democratic America they had known in their boyhoods (if they lived in the country) or had read about in their school histories. Dos Passos, even in those distant days when he co-operated with the Communists, described himself in conversation as "just an old-fashioned believer in liberty, equality and fraternity." Robert Jordan, the hero of *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, uses almost the same phrase about himself. In his last moments, praying for strength, he finds it in the memory of his grandfather, an old Indian fighter. Faulkner and his heroes usually look back to the Civil War; they hear "the wild bugles and the clashing and the dying thunder of hooves." Their music is always remembered, always of the past.

5. The inter-war generation is often described as "disillusioned," but the word has to be qualified. In order to reach a state of disillusionment, one has to start out by having illusions. Children can be disillusioned about strawberry jam, if they eat too much of it, but not about castor oil (unless they made the mistake of believing Mother when she said that it wouldn't taste bad at all). The people in Aldous Huxley's early novels had once had illusions about the war and about the moral standards of

English society; that explains why they felt bitter and cheated afterward. Hemingway and Dos Passos were somewhat younger, besides being natives of another country, and they had never believed in the crusade for democracy or in American middle-class ideals. Their first novels had a note of sullen protest; the disillusionment came later.

It first took the form of lost faith in the possibility of leading the good life—and of writing good books—in isolation or exile. For ten years most of these novelists had been running away from American society, but they ended by seeing the uselessness of flight. A second disillusionment was with the radical doctrines that many of them adopted after they stopped believing in art for art's sake. A third disillusionment was with life itself; at least this seems to be the burden of Hemingway's story, *A Clean, Well Lighted Place*. It ends on a note of absolute nihilism that seems to me more extreme and, in a way, more terrifying than anything written in pre-Revolutionary Russia: "Our nada who art in nada, nada be thy name thy kingdom nada thy will be nada in nada as it is in nada. . . . Hail nothing full of nothing, nothing is with thee." This state of utter blankness proved to be temporary for Hemingway; he could no more remain in it than people can live for years at the South Pole. But Dos Passos a few years later—about the time that Hemingway was writing *For Whom the Bell Tolls*—expressed his disillusionment with the radical movement in a less nihilistic but even more bitter fashion. *The Adventures of a Young Man* is a novel in which youth is dried and ticketed like a weed in a botanical laboratory.

6. Perhaps the weakest feature of the novels I have been discussing is their habit of presenting purely passive characters. The Hemingway hero was described by Wyndham Lewis as the man whom "things are done to." That doesn't apply to Robert Jordan, who chose his own death, but it does apply to the characters of Hemingway's earlier books, not to mention those of Faulkner and Dos Passos; all these people seem incapable of making moral decisions. Either they

act on principles surviving from their childhood and never questioned—this is the case with the best of them—or else they explode into sudden irrational deeds, as is often the case in Faulkner. Dos Passos seems to feel that acts of deliberate choice are not only rare but also lead, when they do occur, to a rapid deterioration of character; note, for example, the story of Dick Savage in *1919* and *The Big Money*. Most of his people act like Pavlov's dogs, responding with reflex actions to mechanical stimuli. That is the chief reason why *U.S.A.*, besides being an accurate picture so far as it goes and by far the best social novel of the 1930's, sometimes impresses us as a specially drawn indictment of American life, with the defense given no chance to reply.

Considering their achievements, it seems foolish to continue speaking of the American novelists between two wars as a lost generation. I think they rank higher than any other group of novelists in our history, although it is still too soon to say how they will rank as individuals or whether any of them will be remembered with Irving and Cooper, let alone with Melville and James. There is, however, one question about them that can be discussed today. Which of their qualities as described above are likely to be permanent in American literature, and which are the special accidents of their time?

Without being too dogmatic about it I should judge that technical expertness is a quality that has been emphasized by good American writers from the beginning. It is a curious tendency, considering the size and diversity and comparative rawness of the country with which they were dealing, but most of them have paid less attention to matter than they have to form. Hawthorne and Poe, not Whitman or Dreiser, were in the dominant tradition. In the same way the lyrical or symbolic novel is more frequent in our

literature—at least in the best of it—and the romantic novel is more frequent in the worst of it than is the social or documentary novel.

It is also safe to say that the majority of good American books have been rebellious, in the sense that they were opposed to the dominant trends in our national life. Our writers from the beginning have stood on the outside of American business and politics, a fact that has sometimes narrowed the scope of their work. We have never had an officially sanctioned and encouraged literature. There were signs that something of the sort was developing in the late 1930's, with the excellent guidebooks of the Federal Writers' Project and the appointment of a poet as Librarian of Congress; but Congress soon made it clear that, as a body, it didn't like books and distrusted the people who wrote them. As for the American Academy, it has never had an official standing, nor has it played much part in our literary life. I have often regretted that we had no formally recognized literature against which young writers could rebel. Usually they have fought merely against popular styles in fiction, and this rebellion against stupidity is likely to be a stupid rebellion.

But this is a remark in passing. The general answer to our question is that among the six qualities discussed above, three at least—technical expertness, rebelliousness, and lyricism—have had a long history in American fiction and are likely to have a future. Disillusionment, too, is a human experience of all eras, although in each of them it takes a different form. As for the two remaining qualities, I should doubt that the novels of the next twenty years will be as international in background and spirit as those we have been discussing, and I should hope that their mood will be less passive and discouraged. All this depends, of course, on the post-war generation that will soon appear.

*Let us spend one day as deliberately as Nature, and not be thrown off the track by every nutshell and mosquito's wing that falls on the rails.*

Henry David Thoreau

## 1946: ON READING POPE

MAYNARD MACK

## I

It gives me a great deal of pleasure and does me a good deal of honor, I think, to be invited to Columbia to speak about Mr. Pope.<sup>1</sup> The honor, I am aware, rightly belongs to Pope, since it is his bicentennial year; but the pleasure is mine, and I intend to make the most of it by talking not about Pope's character or life or critical reputation or bibliography or thought but about his poetry, the one fact that justifies our interest in these other things. I have been disappointed, I must confess, but not surprised that the bicentennial year has now gone by with so little attention to Pope's poetry; for the experience of the last ten years has shown me that Pope is a poet more often written about than read and less often read than misread. There are various ways of accounting for this which I do not propose to go into here—but one important factor, I think, is the mistaken contemporary notion of the couplet. It is quite clear that an unreconstructed modern finds the closed couplet almost a hypnotic, that he mistakes its apparent ease for emptiness, and that he lunges from rime-word to rime-word as if there were nothing to support him in between. Yet in point of fact Pope's couplet is calculated on principles precisely the reverse. If one were forced to guess why Pope preferred to close his couplet, one could do worse than venture that it was to check the forward movement of his verse sufficiently to allow the extraordinarily delicate local structures to take effect. This could be said, to be sure, the other way round: because Pope wrote in couplets, his sensibility had to learn to communicate itself in terms of complex local structures, and doubtless the biographical truth would lie somewhere in between. But the critical consequence is clear: We must read Pope's poetry with the most scrupulous attention, weighing every word.

<sup>1</sup>An address delivered before the English Graduate Union, Columbia University, December 13, 1944.

But this in itself is not enough. Successful reading of poetry, it seems to me, consists in a delicate adjustment between our apprehension of the poem as a whole and parts, a system of interior relationships, and something outside it that I shall call its "matrix." This matrix, as far as it concerns poetry in general, I take to be a mass of miscellaneous items—facts, conceptions, feelings, attitudes, values, everything that the reader has assimilated of the literary and racial past, which is constantly crossing and being revitalized by similar materials from the present. In reading a poem, if one is reading it well, I believe one selects out of this mass of miscellanea exactly the elements which the poem, by virtue of its interior organization, seems to presuppose. In the case of Milton's sonnet on his blindness, for example, two of these elements (there are a great many more) would be items of information: the parable of the talents and the hierarchy of the angels. In the case of Scott's "Proud Maisie," on the other hand, items of information would not be called for. What would be required in the matrix would be a keen sense of the frail pride of beauty—something representing the order of experience expressed in Isaiah's "all flesh is grass," or in Surrey's "Brittle beauty, that nature made so frail," or in Ovid's "Forma bonum fragile est," or whatever else of this sort would keep one from falling into the notion that proud Maisie is the victim of nature's retribution on personal conceit. But one must be at pains not to supply more, or something other, than is called for in the matrix and not to mistake the matrix for the poem. "Missionaries" instead of "angels" will not do for Milton's sonnet on his blindness, and no exterior provisions of whatever richness will restore life to Blackmore's poem on the Creation. The vitality of poetry remains inside it even though it does, like man, have to be fed from without.

I have dwelt this long upon some of the processes of reading poetry because I believe they help explain what has hap-



pened to Mr. Pope. It is not only, I think, that we habitually deny him the kind of close scrutiny his verse demands but that we tend to bring to his poems matrices that are not relevant. The two failures support each other. Since we do not study the structures of his verses more intently, we do not see that something is being called for which we are failing to supply; and because we come to his poems thinking we know already what matrices they require—having them, in fact, prefabricated in our minds—we fail to see in his couplets what is actually going on. Let me give an illustration. In Pope's early but fine poem *Windsor Forest*, there is a couplet which, I imagine has been the most execrated bit of verse in English poetry. The couplet goes as follows:

See Pan with flocks, with fruits Pomona  
crowned,  
Here blushing Flora paints the enamelled  
ground. . . .

Out of the chorus of disapproving voices, I shall select one which I believe is representative, Mr. Bernard Groom's. According to Mr. Groom, Pope's attempts to use the language required for description are "execrable." *Windsor Forest*, he says, contains some of the worst examples of language misapplied to be found anywhere in our literature. He then quotes this couplet, which he calls "a real abomination," and concludes as follows:

Pope would probably have defended these lines by remarking that every word in them of any significance— . . . blushing, paint, enamelled, Pan, Pomona, and Flora—is to be found in descriptive passages of Milton. To which the answer would be: Precisely so; they are Milton's words and you have done nothing to make them your own.

To me the interesting fact about this comment is that Mr. Groom elsewhere in the same essay acknowledges that "on ground that suits him he [Pope] often shows the highest skill in his choice of the expressive word." "On ground that suits him"—I think I detect here the influence of a prefabricated matrix. It may be that a poet does handle himself better on ground that is suited to him, though I am not sure that the phrase means very much;

but certainly if we have found him showing "the highest skill" on any ground, we had better be prepared for its outcroppings elsewhere. Supposing we were prepared and then looked at Pope's couplet, what would we find?

We are helped to our answer, I think, by the word "ground" in the second line, the one word which Mr. Groom does not mention. Pope is referring in the couplet to the various riches of the Windsor Forest region: its flocks, its fruits, its flowers. While we are dealing with the couplet out of context, the references to Pan and Pomona will appear staid enough, but the line about Flora is a different matter. Here the general situation is plainly the covering of the earth with flowers in the springtime, and somebody named Flora, which is also the name of the goddess of flowers, is acting as the agent. This Flora is *blushing*, of course, because she is young, a symbol of the warm life flowing in the earth at that season as it does in the veins of a young girl. She is *painting* something, the colors coming to life and disposing themselves under her brush as the flowers do upon the earth. There is an interanimation between "blushing" and "paints," so that we are forced to recognize in the blushing artist something richer than the picture she is making, in the creative force itself something more mysterious than any of its expressions, as Milton, from whom I fancy Pope learned this trick, implies in the lovely lines about Proserpin, "gathering flowers, herself a fairer flower." In the rest of Pope's line the initial image is carried out. The young girl Flora who is painting at a picture is, of course, painting it on something, as the life-forces of the spring do—she is painting it on a ground. The word is a pun. Pope, who was himself a painter and the intimate friend of several painters, would not have to be told about a painter's ground, or even about an enameled ground. I assume that, as far as the general situation in *Windsor Forest* is concerned, the phrase means that the earth under Flora's influence gradually becomes covered with bright flowers, giving the effect of a high gloss. But within the terms of the painting metaphor, the enameled ground is evidently a reference

to the art of the miniaturist, who did lay his colors carefully on an enameled ground. So that what we perhaps have here finally, along with so much else, is a fairly striking comparison between the beauty of English flowers and the fine clarity and brushwork of the miniature. Nobody would claim that this makes the line great; but it is clear that Pope is seeing his subject freshly as a poet ought to see it; and I do not think we should hear any more about "abominations" or about Pope's having done nothing with these words, whose ever they were originally, to make them his.

At the risk of being dull, however, I am going to extend this discussion a step further. I said a moment ago that out of context the references to Pan and Pomona seem staid enough. Now, if I may, I should like to put them back into context and look at them again. The context at this point in *Windsor Forest* is the pantheon of Olympus. Pope has been comforting the Forest, and through it England, for not having the riches of the East as well as of the West:

Let India boast her plants, nor envy we  
The weeping amber or the balmy tree,  
While by our oaks the precious loads are borne,  
And realms commanded which those trees  
adorn.

Then he turns to Olympus:

Not proud Olympus yields a nobler sight,  
Though gods assembled grace his tow'ring  
height,  
Than what more humble mountains offer here,  
Where, in their blessings, all those gods appear.

Although the interior organization of these lines is almost as subtle as that in the Flora image, I think we may spare ourselves the analysis of it and ask instead the larger question: Why does Pope bring in the Olympians at this point at all? I think we can see why, if we will look again at the lines which I have just quoted on India. What Pope is stating in these lines is that England need not envy the wealth of India since by English "oaks"—that is to say, English shipping—the precious loads of balm and amber are imported and the principalities of India commanded which

those exotic trees adorn. But you will have observed that in the third and fourth lines of the passage this is being said in a peculiar way. Pope is making it appear, by the metaphor in "oaks" and the ambiguity in "borne," that the English trees actually *bear* the amber and the balm. Why is this? Because Pope has carefully formulated this whole opening passage of *Windsor Forest*, from the first line following the invocation through the reference to Queen Anne, in terms of a comparison between England, of which he has made Windsor Forest his symbol, and the all-inclusiveness of the wide world, particularly of that paradigm of the wide world in which, as Milton puts it, God has "To all delight of human sense exposed/In narrow room Nature's whole wealth," that is to say, Eden. Like Eden, like the world, England contains all things, with an order in variety, an equilibrium of opposites, that the older poets recognized as a mark of the Creator's hand wherever seen:

Not Chaos-like together crushed and bruised,  
But, as the world, harmoniously confused:  
Where order in variety we see,  
And where, though all things differ, all agree.

Once this principle has been grasped, the parts of the opening paragraph of *Windsor Forest* fall into place. One sees at once why Pope has picked out for special attention just those features in his landscape which illustrate the presence of opposites that do not clash: the groves—the single trees; the russet plains—the blueish hills; the wild heath—the fertile fields, with a further correspondence between these last ("purple dyes" suggesting the murex) and green islands in the barren sea. Then naturally enough there follows India (the East and West opposed, yet reconciled), whose wealth is playfully made to grow on English oaks; and similarly there follows Olympus, that other realm of imaginative wealth, whose varying gods as vital forces are also seen to be comprised in England: Pan's flocks, Pomona's fruits, the flowers of Flora, Ceres' harvests. Since this is Eden, the harvests are represented as nodding to tempt the reaper, and the reaper's joyful figure is at once caught up into a general portrait of "Rich

Industry," who, as patron of Eden, as patron also of England—"this other Eden, demi-Paradise"—does not need to toil but sits, and smiles, upon the plains.

I have purposely brought into this account the phrases from Milton's Eden and Shakespeare's *Richard II*, in order to stress the fact that Pope is working, here and throughout the remainder of the poem, within a rich inheritance of philosophical notions about the order of the universe, together with political, religious, and, if I may say so, garden feelings about his country. These enable him to bring to bear on present time and place an imaginative spaciousness derived from the entire cosmos and man's past and to make this, appropriately, the setting of a golden age to come. For as the poem begins with Eden, the Paradise that was lost and yet somehow renewed in England—

The Groves of Eden, vanished now so long,  
Live in description, and look green in song:  
These, were my breast inspired with equal  
flame,

Like them in beauty, should be like in fame—  
so it ends, still half-playfully though with soberer overtones, in a kind of vision of Paradise Revisited. I shall quote the passage, because it is a handsome one:

The time shall come, when, free as seas or wind,  
Unbounded Thames shall flow for all mankind,  
Whole nations enter with each swelling tide,  
And seas but join the regions they divide;  
Earth's distant ends our glory shall behold,  
And the new world launch forth to seek the  
old.

Then ships of uncouth form shall stem the tide,  
And feathered people crowd my wealthy side,  
And naked youths and painted chiefs admire  
Our speech, our colour, and our strange attire!  
O stretch thy reign, fair Peace! from shore to  
shore,

Till Conquest cease, and Slavery be no more;  
Till the freed Indians in their native groves  
Reap their own fruits, and woo their sable loves,  
Peru once more a race of kings behold,  
And other Mexico's be roofed with gold.  
Exiled by thee from earth to deepest hell,  
In brazen bonds shall barbed Discord dwell;  
Gigantic Pride, pale Terror, gloomy Care,  
And mad Ambition, shall attend her there:  
There purple Vengeance bathed in gore retires,  
Her weapons blunted, and extinct her fires:  
There hateful Envy her own snakes shall feel,  
And Persecution mourn her broken wheel:

There Faction roar, Rebellion bite her chain,  
And gasping Furies thirst for blood in vain.

Here, as in the opening of the poem, the interior organization of the passage proposes questions. Why, one asks one's self, should the peace of Utrecht, the poet's apparent subject, be presented as exiling to "deepest hell" the embodied passions of sinful man—Pride, Terror, Care, Ambition, Vengeance, Envy, Persecution, Faction, Rebellion, and all the Furies? Why in the next line following this passage should Pope declare it improper to speak of the coming of this time in any but "hallowed" verses? Why should the line ostensibly celebrating the spread of free commerce be so phrased as to remind us, at least dimly, of the act of the Creator in separating the lands with oceans? Why should the New World, with all that is represented in men's minds of promise and hope, be shown, as by a minor miracle, turning to seek the glory of the Old and to wonder at the ways of men who formerly had wondered at its own? What is so reminiscent in the "once more" and "other" of

Peru once more a race of kings behold,  
And other Mexico's be roofed with gold.

By this point, I think, we shall have found our answer. What has been hovering around these lines, like a current flowing from an undiscovered circuit, is the exaltation of Virgil's Fourth Eclogue, the *Pollio*, which everybody remembers best today in Shelley's variation on it, "The world's great age begins anew"; and with the exaltation of the *Pollio*, the feelings of the Messianic visions in Isaiah, traditionally associated with it, which Pope had already woven together in his *Messiah*. Many passages from Isaiah might serve, but particularly pertinent, I think, are the familiar lines in which it is said that the swords shall be beaten into plowshares and the nations shall not learn war any more; also the lines predicting that at the coming of the New Jerusalem men shall build houses and live in them, plant vineyards and eat the fruit of them—"they shall not build and another inhabit, they shall not plant and another eat"; and, finally, the lines

wherein the exaltation of the city is pictured, the Gentiles with their princes acknowledging its glory and coming from afar by ship and camel, bearing the treasures of the earth:

... the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. . . . Then shalt thou see, and flow together, and thine heart shall fear and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee. . . . Therefore thy gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day or night; that men may bring unto thee the forces of the Gentiles, and that their kings may be brought.

Pope, of course, is using these backgrounds with a difference. Isaiah, in part, has in mind the future humiliation of the kings and people who have humiliated Israel; Pope, in part, the restoration of the kings and peoples who have been plundered by Europeans. Similarly, Virgil in the *Pollio* foresees for a time the old spoiliations renewing—another Argo, another Troy—whereas Pope turns his reminiscence of these lines into a picture of reconstruction—the *restoration* of the Incas, the *rebuilding* of Mexico. But Pope's lines presuppose the recognition of both the similarities and the differences. When Pope says (in a note) that he is celebrating a hope that London may be made a Free Port, he is saying what is true; but he is celebrating this hope as Spenser does Queen Elizabeth and Donne, Elizabeth Drury; as Milton transforms the bare narrative of Genesis and Shakespeare the tabloid incidents that form the basis of his plots—in terms of as many aspects as possible of man's experience and collective past.

## II

I do not pretend for a moment to place *Windsor Forest* beside the poems to which I have just referred. On the contrary, I have deliberately selected this poem because, though it is misunderstood and greatly underestimated, it is not one of Pope's major works. Great things are brought to bear in it, but not, I think, in the main, upon great issues. My purpose has been illustrative, and what I have wished to illustrate, as I said at the beginning, is a

subtlety of organization in Pope's poetry which characterizes all his work and hence requires on our part a sustained alertness; for it is a peculiarity of the Augustan idiom, in both prose and verse, not to warn us, as usually other idioms do, when it is about to touch upon great argument or suspend profundities in a trifle. Donne, we know, is likely to apprise us with some arresting comparison—a compass, a map, a besieged town, a quincunx; Shakespeare by a coruscation of metaphors or sheer hyperbole of language; Milton and Wordsworth, on the other hand, with a long slow river of apparent statement on which they will have set adrift an enormous traffic in evocations. Wordsworth, for example, launching into the subject of man's mind in the preface to "The Recluse," serves notice by the solemnity of his tone and the multiplicity of his references to Milton that his theme is grave and large:

... Urania, I shall need  
Thy guidance, or a greater Muse, if such  
Descend to earth or dwell in the highest  
heaven!  
For I must tread on shadowy ground, must  
sink  
Deep—and, aloft ascending, breathe in worlds  
To which the heaven of heavens is but a veil.  
All strength—all terror, single or in bands,  
That ever was put forth in personal form—  
Jehovah—with his thunder, and the choir  
Of shouting Angels, and the empyreal thrones—  
I pass them unalarmed. Not Chaos, not  
The darkest pit of lowest Erebus,  
Nor aught of blinder vacancy, scooped out  
By help of dreams—can breed such fear and  
awe  
As fall upon us often when we look  
Into our minds, into the Mind of Man—  
My haunt, and the main region of my song.

Pope, on the contrary, about to deal in the *Essay on Man* with an analogous subject, opens his poem so casually, so conversationally, with a set of such familiar field and garden metaphors, that we are likely to read right over—in fact, I find most people do—the explicit allusion to the "garden tempting with forbidden fruit," which not only informs us of the necessary literary and theological matrix but reminds us of the fact that in this poem Eden has become the world—man's first temptation was not his last.

This habit of opening out vistas while seeming to be looking at something close at hand is a characteristic feature of Pope's verse. Sometimes the vistas opened and the something close at hand are congruous or, to improve the metaphor, their lines of force flow all one way; and when this is true you have the kinds of effect I have noted in *Windsor Forest* and just now in the *Essay on Man*. But often there will be a covert antagonism between the vista and the immediate matter. What happens then is a collision of fields of force, as in the famous line on Sappho, "pox'd by her love, or libelled by her hate." The tingle in this line does not come, I think, from a sense that something shocking has been said about a woman; but from a profounder sense that something important has been said about the nature of human love. The immediate matter in the line, as I take it, is that evil is the consequence, no matter what you have to do with Sappho, and the parallelism in the two halves of the line supports this; but the vistas open out when you pause to consider that the two halves are also antithetical and that two results, both evil, are being made to spring from causes, one of which is good. The point is very clear if one substitutes "lust" for "love." Then one suddenly sees that this line, which seems to be exclusively concerned with Sappho or those whom she contaminates, is equally concerned with the way in which a supreme spiritual good can be corrupted so that its effects become as evil for the possessor and society as those of hate. In fact, it is difficult to say (as we shall find on a second inspection the line refuses to determine for us) whether it is Sappho or her victim who really becomes diseased by her love and falsely represented by her hate.

Examples of this sort of management can be picked almost at random from Pope's poems. I think, for instance, of the innocuous-looking couplets in the third *Moral Essay*, where Pope is talking to Bathurst of the misuse of riches by men of wealth and where the vista opened is obvious but not, I think, usually remarked:

Yet, to be just to these poor men of pelf,  
Each does but hate his neighbour as himself:

Damned to the Mines, an equal fate betides  
The Slave that digs it, and the Slave that hides.

The collision in these lines is not merely between the spiritual and material senses of "poor" as applied to "men of pelf," an apparent inaccuracy supporting a profound exactitude; nor between the physical and spiritual senses of slavery in the forced slave that digs it and the willing slave that hoards; but in the window quietly opened in the second line upon wealth of a different kingdom—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it; Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself"—which suddenly lights up the meaning of "Damned to the Mines" with recognition of the eternal interrelatedness of the oppressions of others and the damnations of self by which men make their earth a hell. It is not by accident that, in accounting humorously for their motives three lines later, Pope should write:

Some war, some plague, some famine they foresee,  
Some revelation hid from you and me.<sup>2</sup>

More complicated in its effect but similar in tone and method is the story of Balaam which closes this same poem. There is not time to analyze this narrative in detail; but its immediate matter is the career of one of those men, common enough in every age, who rise by a combination of industry and fraud to political and social eminence only to find that the process has destroyed them. In the beginning, Balaam is seen as "a plain good man," having all the virtues by which human societies usually set store, that is to say, he is religious, punctual, frugal, honest—"His word would pass for more than he was worth"—hardworking, and prudential. He gets his first windfall when "two rich shipwrecks bless the lucky shore" of his lands in Cornwall, and the next we hear of him he is *Sir* Balaam, beginning, now, to live up to his income, "like other folks." At this point a second windfall arrives in the shape of a valuable diamond,

<sup>2</sup>Italics mine.



not rightly his but which, with some adjustment of conscience, he manages to keep for himself; and from then on, good fortune follows on good fortune until he is one of England's financial princes, able, when his wife unexpectedly dies, to marry "a nymph of quality" and take his place in the political world:

A Nymph of Quality admires our Knight;  
He marries, bows at Court, and grows polite;  
Leaves the dull Cits, and joins (to please the fair)

The well-bred cuckolds in St. James's air:  
First, for his Son a gay commission buys,  
Who drinks, whores, fights, and in a duel dies:  
His daughter flaunts a Viscount's tawdry wife;  
She bears a Coronet and P—x for life.  
In Britain's Senate he a seat obtains,  
And one more Pensioner St. Stephen gains.  
My lady falls to play; so bad her chance,  
He must repair it; takes a bribe from France;  
The House impeach him; Coningsby harangues;  
The Court forsake him, and Sir Balaam hangs.

Pope's tone, it will be observed, is almost like a shrug. Deceptively like a shrug, for what we must notice in the first place is that he has set this sordid little incident against the background of the Book of Job. It is Satan, ostensibly, who brings about the catastrophe. Back in the days when Balaam was a "plain good man," Pope tells us,

The Dev'l was piqued such saintship to behold,  
And longed to tempt him like good Job of old:  
But Satan now is wiser than of yore,  
And tempts by making rich, not making poor.

It is "the Prince of Air," therefore, who makes the two rich shipwrecks bless the lucky shore; it is "the Tempter" who after the diamond episode causes stocks and subscriptions to pour in on every side; and it is the same agent who brings about the death of Balaam's first wife. But, in the second place, this is no ordinary story of the collapse of virtue under temptation. Pope's insight in this respect is, I think, very fine. If we look again at the lines describing Balaam in the days before the devil tempted him, we discover that he was a thoroughgoing materialist from the start, that this, in fact, is the only reason why the devil could successfully tempt him, as

he never could the biblical Job. Balaam's saintship comprised the virtues of a secular society but not the virtues of the spirit; and therefore what seems to Balaam the natural harvest of his piety and what Pope pretends to be presenting to us as a program of deterioration is actually the logic of materialism. When at the end of the passage the devil appears to claim his winnings, Pope says:

Wife, son and daughter, Satan! are thy own,  
His wealth, yet dearer, forfeit to the Crown:  
The Devil and the King divide the prize,  
And sad Sir Balaam curses God and dies.

What is the prize, we wonder. Evidently Balaam's wealth and soul. But which is which? I think this is just the point of the line. Balaam's wealth is his soul; it is impossible to separate what is really one, it can only be divided. And who is Balaam? Balaam, despite the partially good things said of him in the story in the Book of Numbers, is the symbol in all later biblical tradition of covetousness, the man by whose counsel Israel bowed down to idols, who was willing through love of money to attempt a curse on Israel, and whose general reputation is typically summed up in the Epistle of Jude: "Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward," and also in the Book of Revelation: ". . . Thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication." One can see, I think, what kind of wealth Pope is contrasting with the wealth of Balaam and what sounds of distant thunder he manages to make reverberate beneath his apparently jaunty tone.

I should like to permit myself one last example of this method, one which extends its implications over the whole of a distinguished poem, the *Essay on Man*. The passage occurs toward the opening of the Fourth Epistle, in which Pope is to deal with the problem of this world's goods in his vindication of God's ways to man. He has, as I noted earlier, in the opening lines of the *Essay* reminded us of the Miltonic and biblical backgrounds,

and he has kept open before us throughout the several epistles, though most readers do not seem to observe this, a variety of windows on the proper religious matrix of his poem, sometimes by references explicitly biblical, sometimes by literary and philosophical notions long assimilated to Christian humanism. I am not now concerned with these; I am interested only in underlining the fact that the passage I am about to quote is one of many of the same species. Pope, as I say, is arguing in this epistle, as a host of moralists have done before and since, that external goods are not worth the effort or consequences of their acquisition, and the lines I have in mind are these:

Oh sons of earth! attempt ye still to rise,  
By mountains piled on mountains, to the skies?  
Heaven still with laughter the vain toil surveys,  
And buries madmen in the heaps they raise.

The fullest editorial comment on this passage that I know of goes as follows:

He had in mind Virgil's description, borrowed from Homer, of the attempt made by the giants, in their war against the gods, to scale the heavens by heaping Ossa upon Pelion, and Olympus upon Ossa. Pope took the expressions "sons of earth" and "mountains piled on mountains" from Dryden's translation, *Geor. i*, 374.

Here again I feel the presence of an inadequate matrix. Certainly, our legitimate interest in Pope's sources should not be allowed to blind us to what he is doing with them. What is he doing? In the first place, as the comment says, he is alluding to the well-known effort of the Titans to unseat Olympian Jove, by mountains piled on mountains, and the Titans are, appropriately, the sons of earth as being sprung from Terra. This is the use that Dryden, translating Virgil, makes of the phrases; but Pope is doing more. In Pope's context the sons of earth are plainly also the accumulators of material goods, the Balaams of the world. They are sons of earth in being dedicated to earthly gain. They are sons of earth in being, like the Titans, heapers-up of mountains of material power. They are sons of earth in *bubris*, in imagining, like the Titans, that by such power they can obtain the skies. And they are sons of earth in the plain sense of being

mortal, something that the Titans were not, which makes man's arrogance more fantastic and his self-deception more tragic in its effect; for—in the second place—Pope now turns from the effort of the materialist to its consequences:

Heaven still with laughter the vain toil surveys,  
And buries madmen in the heaps they raise.

In the light of what has preceded, we recognize the spiritual sense of "bury" and the reference, as with Balaam, to the logic of materialism by which the soul becomes subdued to what it works in and the sin its own appropriate reward. But we recognize also the continuing allusion to the Titans, whom Jove did bury, when he defeated them, under mountains; we remember that the rebellion of the Titans is associated by Milton with the rebellion of the angels and that during the war in heaven the engines of the rebels were "Under the weight of mountains buried deep" and on their own heads "main promontories flung"; and we notice that Pope has arranged the first line of this couplet to echo the second Psalm, where the heathen are represented as conspiring to rid themselves of God's ordinances, and Jehovah laughs:

Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing [observe "*vain* toil"]? The kings of the earth [observe "sons of earth"] set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break these bonds asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh [observe "heaven still with laughter"]: the Lord shall have them in derision.

What Pope seems to be doing, in other words, is concentrating within these couplets all the instances he can muster of pride rebelling against the Lord, in order to make us see against this context the meaning of the world's obsession with material goods. It is not simply that materialism buries the soul in the heaps it raises, but that the pursuit of material value is an act of *bubris*, a rebellion against the laws of God; and with this fact in mind the relationships of the entire poem become illumined.

If there were space, I should go into these relationships in some detail. I should

try to show that as this poem begins, like *Windsor Forest*, with an intimation of lost Eden, so it ends, again like *Windsor Forest*, with a curious intimation of a Paradise to be regained. And I should try to show how throughout this poem Pope is working within a carefully suggested framework of philosophical and Christian thought, working progressively and for the most part with an almost perfect unity from the first line of the first epistle to the last line of the last; for I think that, of all Pope's poems, the *Essay on Man* is the one most profoundly misunderstood. But time runs out and I must return to my beginning. What I have tried to show is that Pope's poems need to be read, like the poems of other poets, with insight and on their own terms and that these terms are, in Pope's case, a combination of intensity with poise. In this combination I think we have tended to overlook the prior term. Preoccupied with the unruffled surface—the "polish," to use the fashionable cliché—we have forgotten to observe what resides within and underneath it. Pope is anything but the poet of superficialities; on the contrary, he spent his whole life combating them, and with an exquisite decorum. In the *Rape of the Lock* it is done with tenderness, a sense of the endearing charm of mortal foibles, for one does not impale a butterfly upon an ax; but in the *Dunciad* it is done with indignation, for one does not survey the dry rot in a whole society through the rainbow wings of sylphs. Similarly, Pope is not the poet of chilly formalisms, against which, too, all his work protests. From the lines in the *Essay on Criticism*, stressing "the nameless graces that no methods teach," to the portrait of Chloe in the *Characters of Women*, whose practically perfect nature is seen to lack everything because it lacks the creative spontaneity

that raises rectitude to virtue, to the great lines on learning in the fourth book of the *Dunciad*, Pope never loses sight of the fact that the preference of means to ends is death. And, finally, Pope is not the poet of a complacent rationality or unspiritualized common sense. Sensible he is, but I know no poet more keenly aware than he of the skeleton beneath the skin, and, what is always true with the great poets, of the soul beneath the skeleton. It is this awareness that makes gleam on his pages that complex ironic view of the grandeur and misery of man, the precariousness of his predicament, and the enormous importance, therefore, of preserving and extending the little he has achieved, which might be called the typical Popian mode; for Pope's subject, like the subject of all poets, is, finally, the potentialities and actualities of men. It would be wrong to obscure the fact that the actualities of men loom larger in the surface of Pope's poetry than their potentialities and that he is compelled by the absence of the power of myth-making and fine fabling, which no poet since Milton has been entirely able to recover, to see these actualities close up: he has no Duessa or Giant Despair to afford us; no assembly of fallen angels; no Thersites, Timon, Lucio, or Hamlet. But though it would be wrong to obscure this fact, it would be equally wrong not to see in Pope's poetry, among and underneath the actualities with which its surface is concerned, the continual flashings-in from other worlds—which like the words of Sarpedon echoing behind the counsel of Clarissa to Belinda, or the words of the Pollio, *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained*, and the Bible behind the close of the *Dunciad*, remind us not only of what man has lost but of what it is always possible for him to regain.

## 1948: A PHILOSOPHY OF LANGUAGE

JAMES B. McMILLAN

During the last fifty years the discipline which we call "linguistic science" has developed a considerable body of knowledge and a trustworthy methodology;

likewise the study of aesthetics has made productive use of comparative and historical facts and the findings of relevant sciences. Yet the study of the English language in

our schools (which one would naïvely suppose to be based on linguistics and aesthetics as biology is based on chemistry, physics, and genetics) has gone its own way, changing, it is true, but never aligning itself with the kindred disciplines. In fact, a remarkable dichotomy has occurred, with the specialists in language operating almost completely outside the sphere of the teachers and textbook writers in grammar, composition, and rhetoric.

In spite of this anomaly, the kinship of the matters discussed in the various kinds of English language classes suggests that an integrated philosophy of language (grammar, composition, rhetoric) can be formulated; such a formulation is the purpose of this paper. Since it is a philosophy for use and not for ornament, it will be called *a* philosophy, not *the* philosophy. Just as people who want to measure a rug do not argue the fundamental validity of the meter or the foot but agree to use meters or feet and proceed with their measuring, so I propose to state certain basic postulates and proceed to derive from them several useful sequiturs and implications. And just as use of the foot requires the measurer to use feet and inches throughout his job, and to divide feet into inches, not centimeters, so the use of particular postulates requires the writer to limit his derivations to those legitimately entailed by the postulates. The basic premises will not be defended. The dissenter is welcome to reject them and choose others or to choose none at all. Eclecticism is practiced, sometimes knowingly, by many people.

The first premise is the assumption that the job of the student or teacher of grammar, composition, or rhetoric is to make statements about language. The second premise is that we expect such statements to be true, according to the speaker's definition of truth. And the final premise is that there are recognized in this context two kinds of truth: (1) objective truth and (2) subjective truth.

Two factors determine the speaker's choice of one or the other kind of truth: (a) the purpose of the speaker and (b) the nature of the matter discussed. If the speaker wishes to make his statements

verifiable by other competent observers, he uses objective truth. His statements are thus independent of his personal authority; they stand or fall as they are observationally verified. Being hypotheses, they are subject to revision, and they claim no finality. If, however, the speaker wishes to base his statements on private authority, he uses subjective truth. He validates his asseverations by his personal prestige, eloquence, high motives, conformity to a selected tradition, or superior desk-pounding. Being descriptive of his private attitudes, such statements pertain in whole or in part to the speaker's interior bodily activities and to his history,<sup>1</sup> not to the subjects mentioned in his sentences.

But a desire for objectivity does not alone make statements objective. The data discussed must have tangible, sensory reality. Only matters which can be quantitatively measured or described in physical terms can be the subject of objectively true statements. Metaphysics is thus ruled out, as is poetry,<sup>2</sup> theology, and ethics.

Now back to the grammarian. If he proposes to write literature, if to him grammar is a species of poetry or fiction, he is welcome to utilize subjective statements. There is no law against it. But he should be fair to his readers and announce that he depends for truth primarily on his private impulses. He is not operating within a learned discipline, and he should no more condescend to debate his assertions than should a poet or a prophet. In the very nature of his activity he can do nothing but assert his views and reinforce them by some sort of external authority. The reader cannot test the validity of a subjective statement; he can only test his willingness to be bound by the authority of the speaker or the extent of his accidental agreement with the speaker. This condition is true in grammar no less than in aesthetics.

If we make the arbitrary assumption that the grammarian wants to use objective

<sup>1</sup>This does not mean that literature is all lies; it means that the writer of literature, in order to discuss some subjects, may go beyond the bounds of sensible reality, giving up objective verifiability but counting it no loss.

truth wherever he can, we turn to his data to find when and where he can be a scientist. We discover that the facts pertaining to language fall into two groups, one made up of measurable data, the other made up of imponderables. The first we shall call "grammar"; it can be a science. The second we shall call "rhetoric"; limited by present knowledge, it is an art. This division is not arbitrary; it is made automatically by the objectivity or subjectivity of the relevant data. The division does not bind the grammarian who does not desire objectivity.

The province of the grammarian qua scientist is twofold, because the facts with which he operates fall into two categories: (1) linguistic and (2) sociological. The linguistic facts concern the phonology, morphology, syntax, and lexicon of the language. The sociological facts concern the attitudes toward locutions held by people in various societal situations. Each of these two categories has two subdivisions: (a) present-day facts and (b) historical facts.

Linguistic facts are statements severely limited to description of the forms of the language and are derived from actual observation of speech and writing. The objective of the grammarian qua linguist in this subprovince is the objective of any scientist: the collection, classification, and analysis of all relevant data and the formulation of "laws" (descriptive hypotheses). His goal is "understanding" language. Sociological facts concern the folklore of language, the beliefs of people about specific words and constructions. Such facts are usually records of the situations in which certain locutions are disfavored and the situations in which locutions are used without disfavor. The objective of the scientific grammarian in this field is to label language forms according to their usage and so to provide a useful information service which helps citizens "win friends and influence people" by using the "right" locutions.

If the grammarian as student of the language proposes to state what *should be* rather than what *is* the language, he leaves the confines of objective verifiable truth; this course is perfectly all right, provided he knows that he is making unverifiable

statements. If the grammarian as student of language etiquette proposes to define what *should be* called "bad English" rather than to say what expressions *are actually treated as* "bad English," he likewise becomes a subjective moralist. Moralizing instead of describing is, of course, legitimate, but the honest moralizer labels his statements personal assertions, and he renounces any claim to verifiability.

This insistence that moralizing statements in grammar be clearly recognized as personal assertions is not a pedantic vagary; it is a necessary implication of comparative and historical language study. There is not a single philologist, living or dead, who has been able to adduce a single iota of objective factual evidence for saying that *are not* is more legitimately English than *ain't*. Philologists can, however, find evidence that people in some social contexts punish the user of *ain't*. The reason for such punishment is nonlinguistic. If the language habits of one group of people are respected or disliked by other people, the respect or dislike is a matter of social psychology, not of grammar. In language "whatever is, is right" simply because there is no discovered source of knowledge about language except language itself. And, in sociology, that which a group of people consider right is, to that group, right. From his objective study the grammarian knows that there is nothing ambiguous or inefficient about the common double negative; but, if some people taboo the construction and others want to emulate those who taboo it, the job of the grammarian is, perforce, to record the taboo.

The grammarian (linguist) in his function of "understanding" language as an intellectual discipline records the plain facts that *It's me* and *It's I* are alternative forms in present-day English, just as *can't* and *cannot* are alternative forms. The grammarian in his function as an Emily Post of language records the treatment accorded *It's me* and *It's I* by various social groups.

Textbook writers are frequently betrayed into confusing linguistic and sociological provinces because the nomenclature of the two fields is the same, because "laws" of etiquette are phrased exactly as are "laws" of language, and because certain social



prejudices have been traditionally stated as grammatical laws. For instance, the linguist finds English-speaking people saying *It's me* and *It's I*, but not *It's my*. He proceeds to state the law that the case of a pronoun which is a complement after *is* is nominative or objective, not possessive. He knows that any case can follow *is* which actually follows it, and he states his rule as a description of what he finds. The usage student may find *It's me* taboo in formal written English, along with *It's her*, *It's them*, etc., and may state the generalized rule that the nominative is required after *is*. But his statement applies only to formal written English, and it is a rule only as long as it is true to the observed facts. It is not true of the English language that *is* must be followed by a nominative; it will be true of formal written English only as long as such is the practice, and the law will apply only to the societal situations in which it actually obtains. Formal written English is not the language; it is merely one type of English. Its rules are pertinent only to people studying or writing formal written English; other types of English have their own rules.

It is the duty of the grammarian to announce publicly which of his functions he is performing, just as it is his duty to announce what kind of truth he is using. (The confusion of grammar and language etiquette is epidemic in conventional textbooks, where there is a superstition that analysis of the language has something to do with "speaking and writing correctly.")

The rhetorician has likewise two provinces: (1) the useful art of communication and (2) the fine art of speaking and writing beautifully. Our present ignorance of biosociology makes it impossible for the rhetorician to be a scientist.

In the practical art of communication, the rhetorician can be objective only as far as semantics is a science. In practice most rhetoricians use the lexicographer's common-knowledge and synonymy tests to determine whether an expression serves as an efficient means of communication, and so operate with a good deal of practical objectivity. (This statement does not apply to the grammarians and rhetoricians who talk about the "essential" meaning of a

word; they are moralists.) In this field the rhetorician may choose to use the statements of the grammarian, but he is not a grammarian, because he does not deal solely with language forms.

In the fine art of composition the rhetorician is an aesthetician and is thus obliged to set up and use aesthetic standards. Such standards are necessarily at bottom subjective, as the history of aesthetics so insistently shows. The rhetorician *may* hold as one of his several tenets that artistic composition must be in idiomatic English, and he may therefore make use of grammar; he *may* hold that in certain contexts the language of certain social groups is desirable, and in such cases may use the statements of usage students; he *may* be concerned with efficiency of communication as a factor in art and, if so, may make use of the statements of practical rhetoric. But, in addition, the rhetorician legitimately talks about the desirability or undesirability of words and constructions without being concerned with idiom, usage, or denotation. For example, he may prefer the word *carmine* to the word *red* in a particular sentence because his taste dictates *carmine*. No objective standard for such preferences can be required of the rhetorician, since "beauty" in language is not a simple tangible entity or quality. It may be any quality liked or approved by any person. The presence of beauty cannot be demonstrated; it can only be asserted. Competent aestheticians, like competent critics, poets, spiritualists, and theologians, can be flatly contradicted without suffering any disadvantage.

The important point for our analysis is this: a grammarian who is ostensibly discussing grammar cannot legitimately drag in rhetorical criteria and values. When he sets out to describe objectively the language or the etiquette of the language, he is expected to do just what he proposes; if he covertly slips in aesthetic statements, he misrepresents the facts he is supposed to be presenting. This is no disparagement of rhetoric; I am merely insisting that, because it is by nature subjective, its practitioners should carefully avoid being mistaken for grammarians and that gram-

marians should carefully leave rhetoric out of grammar.

It is obvious that the textbook and instructor in discussing the English language must at times make evaluative statements. It is useful to recognize two sharply distinct kinds of value: (1) instrumental and (2) terminal. Anything having instrumental value is useful as a means to an end. Anything having terminal value is good as an end in itself. It is not possible to debate questions of value. If a discussion concerns an instrumental value, the disagreement cannot be settled by logical argument but must be settled by getting the requisite information. This is, one simply finds out, by observation, whether the thing actually serves as a means and accomplishes its end. If a discussion concerns a terminal value, there can be no debate because there is no way to settle such a dispute. No objective moot question is raised. What is "bad" to one person (for instance, homely idioms or precious writing) may be "good" to another. Is peppermint or cinnamon a "better" flavor? Since terminal evaluations are descriptive of the speaker's taste, they cannot be debated as if they were objective; they can only be asserted.

When the grammarian is a scientist speaking in his function as an understander of the language, he makes no evaluative statements whatsoever (although he accepts the basic social premise of all the sciences that "understanding" is valuable); he merely describes the language as he finds it. Like any scientist, he is interested in what is, not in what ought to be.

In his function as a student of language etiquette, the grammarian must use evaluations, but he cannot make them. This fact is obscured by the grammarian's habit of using the terms "good" and "bad" in labeling expressions. When one of these adjectives is applied to a language form by a scientific grammarian, it is not in reality an evaluative term; it is a shorthand label meaning something like "This locution is favored (or disfavored) by so-and-so people in such-and-such contexts." When we translate "good English" and "bad English" into these meanings, it is clear that the phrases are not judgments of value, as

they appear to be, but are simple descriptive statements. Since they merely record the presence or absence of specific locutions in specific contexts (the existence of taboo or disfavor being presumed when a popular expression is regularly avoided in a given context), the labels are completely objective and can be verified by anybody who can read or hear.

The evaluations used (not made) by the grammarian in this province are made by society. The social groups whose language is considered "right" in certain contexts are selected by nonlinguistic criteria. The avoidance of expressions which are disliked by a "superior" group may be a good-in-itself or it may be a means to an end. The grammarian is not concerned with the basis of the evaluation, since it is not a linguistic matter; he simply uses it, confining himself to facts about the usage. Because professional writers of belles-lettres use words as their stock-in-trade, they have been commonly supposed to have some mysterious genius-knowledge of language, and conformity to their grammatical habits has come to be for some people a terminal value. In the same way, grammarians (rhetoricians) have in the past acquired a spurious reputation of knowing what is "good" in grammar, and people have attached a terminal value to speaking and writing according to certain dogmatic rules. But values in language etiquette are usually instrumental; most people want to talk and write like the socially and economically successful as a means of identifying themselves with the "upper classes." Likewise they want to avoid resemblance to the socially unsuccessful, the "illiterate." Such evaluations are made precisely as are evaluations in dress and manners.

The scientific student of usage is a servant of society. He can describe the usage of any group that interests his audience, or he can describe the usage of all groups; but he cannot arrogate linguistic "superiority" to any particular group.

The rhetorician also deals with evaluations. In the useful art of writing and speaking, communication is assumed to be valuable, and whatever further instrumental values are necessary to effect

communication are legitimate. In the fine art of literature, the rhetorician must set up terminal values according to aesthetic criteria, and objective instrumental values may be derived from the terminal values.

It is sufficient for our purposes to note that rhetorical values are proper and legitimate as long as they are labeled rhetorical values. The grammarian cannot be a scientist and assume that an aesthetic "good" is an objective reality pertinent to grammar. Church windows are frequently much admired, but they are not the sole standard for judging residence and museum windows.

If the three basic postulates of this exposition are acceptable and if the derivations are legitimate and valid, the following conclusions appear to be justifiable:

First, it is possible for the English teacher to hold an integrated, consistent philosophy of grammar and rhetoric which is based on and makes use of the relevant underlying disciplines, and which allows him as much practical objectivity as most of the learned disciplines permit. It seems to be true that most of our colleagues in other fields have renounced authoritarianism and are encouraging students to demand reasons which they can verify instead of dogmas which they must swallow; it is not likely that the English teacher can long claim exemption from this tendency, and it is likely that he will be much happier when he can be as objective as a psychologist or a sociologist.

Second, if the English instructor chooses to use scientific methodology, then he will have to divorce the study and teaching of "correct" usage from the study and teaching of grammar. This means that in usage he must follow the general principles of modern scientific language study. If the study of grammar as an intellectual discipline is to be included in a curriculum (and the curriculum-maker must decide whether it is or is not), then the course must be different from what passes for grammar today. Conventional formal grammar, which is an eclectic application of certain rules of Latin grammar to arbitrarily selected segments of English morphology and syntax, must give way to a thorough-going inductive study of the English language. The traditional superstitious identification of the "rules" of English grammar with the "rules" of a mythical "good English" must go.

Third, the present dichotomy between the specialists and the teachers (including textbook writers) appears to have little excuse for existence and little hope for survival. It cannot be long that English teachers who hold scholarly research in literature in high regard will persist in ignoring scholarly research in language. If the literature teachers were scornful of objectivity generally, then the objective study of language could hardly hope to attract them; but factual knowledge in literary history has become indispensable, and factual knowledge in language must surely become equally indispensable.

## 1951: THE ROMANTIC UNITY OF "KUBLA KHAN"

RICHARD HARTER FOGLE

In his valuable book on *Keats' Craftsmanship*, M. R. Ridley has cited *Kubla Khan* along with the "magic casements" passage of Keats's "Nightingale" ode as the very essence of "the distilled sorceries of Romanticism," and his statement is more or less typical. This concept of "romantic magic" has its sanction and is by no means to be discarded as pointless. In practice, however, it has had the

unfortunate effect of discouraging critical analysis; and it likewise plays into the hands of those of our contemporaries who incline to look upon Romantic poetry as a kind of moonlit mist, which dissolves at the touch of reality and reason.

The fascinating but uncritical study of Lowes, with its emphasis upon the irrational and the unconscious, and its untiring quest for sources, has had an equally un-

fortunate and discouraging influence. Only recently, with the work of Elisabeth Schneider and others who have pointed the way, has it become possible to think of *Kubla Khan* as other than a kind of magnificent freak and to treat it as an intelligible poem which lies open to critical examination. And the influence of Lowes still imposes upon the student the tyranny of source study. He has opened so wide a field for speculation that scholars are still inclined rather to revise or enlarge his conclusions than to proceed to the task of the critic.

The study of possible sources for Coleridge's imagery is valuable. Whatever we can get, in fact, in the way of information on the genesis and the circumstances of a poem is useful. Such information, however, can be dangerous if we exaggerate its function and substitute it for the poem itself. It is background, not foreground. To discover, for instance, a parallel between a passage in Plato and a poem of Coleridge is valuable when it adds to the poem's potential meaning; but the discovery is misused if Plato is permitted to determine what Coleridge is talking about. The proper place to study Coleridge's poetry is ultimately *The Poetical Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*.

By implication the foregoing incautious remarks bind this essay to a twofold effort: first, to give such an account of *Kubla Khan*'s "distilled sorceries" and "romantic magic" as will reconcile them with the rational and discursive processes of criticism; and, second, to account for them within the bounds of the poem. As to the first, no one need fear that our "romantic magic" will be dispelled, such a Pyrrhic victory as that lying quite beyond either the powers or the wishes of the present writer. As to the second, I hope for a generously loose construction as to what the bounds of the poem include.

A number of contentions must precede the specific examination of *Kubla Khan*. First, the immediate literary effect intended and obtained in it by Coleridge is pleasure—a pleasure which derives from that very "Romantic sorcery" of which we have spoken. This pleasure, as Pope says of Nature, is "the source, and end, and test"

of poetic art. It is not necessary, of course, to claim that Coleridge has found the only means of attaining it. Second, this pleasure is in no way incompatible with even the profoundest meaning; is in fact inseparable from meaning. The basic criterion for poetry is in the broadest sense human interest: a poem should deal with a human situation of universal interest treated with sympathy, judgment, and insight. This human significance is not to be regarded as a monopoly of the classical or neoclassical humanist but belongs to the Romantic poet as well. Third, *Kubla Khan* embodies the Coleridgean doctrine of "the reconciliation of opposites." On this point be it added that the authority of the poem is at least equal to prose definitions of these doctrines; it is the living word, as opposed to the skeleton of abstract definition. Neither, however, is fully intelligible without the other. Finally, *Kubla Khan* is in the most essential sense a completed work, in that it symbolizes and comprehends the basic Romantic dilemma, a crucial problem of art.

To avoid misunderstanding, let us preface interpretation of the poem with a self-evident but necessary distinction. *Kubla Khan* is "fanciful" rather than "realistic"; the simplest, most basic pleasure it provides stems rather from its distance from actuality than from any versimilitude or skilful imitation of matter of fact. It belongs in the category of what Dryden called "the fairy way of poetry," and consideration of its meaning must be controlled by our understanding of this limitation. With this conceded, however, we can still demonstrate the immensely important fact of its basic humanity and significance. The setting of *Kubla Khan* is pleasurable and well removed from any contact with the sharp edges of the actual; yet within its enchanted garden we shall find problems of the weightiest import. Thus the central situation of the poem is the spacious pleasure-garden of Kubla:

So twice five miles of fertile ground  
With walls and towers were girdled round. . .

And the poem itself is embodied in this garden, various, extensive, yet inclosed from the world without. But our esti-

mate of the situation is incomplete if it ignores the implications of the towered walls. A reality against which we must fortify ourselves is hardly a reality which we can ignore. We must then extend our definition to include this implication and consider the core of the poem to reside in an opposition or stress between the garden, artificial and finite, and the indefinite, inchoate, and possibly turbulent outside world.

Since, however, what lies beyond the walls is only implied, not imaged, we must pass to whatever relationships exist inside them.

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan  
A stately pleasure-dome decree. . . .

This pleasure-dome is the focal point of the physical setting and is correspondingly important. Within the bounds of the encircled garden, the pleasure-dome and the river are the opposites to be reconciled. The pleasure-dome is associated with Man, as Kubla is an emblem of Man; it figures his desire for pleasure and safety; it stands for strictly human and finite values. The image of the dome suggests agreeable sensations of roundedness and smoothness; the creation of Man, its quasi-geometrical shape is simpler than the forms of Nature which surround it, yet blends with them. This dome, however, also evokes the religious—it is in some sort a temple, if only to the mere mortal Kubla Khan. And thus there is also a blending or interfusion with its opposite, the sacred river Alph.

The pleasure-dome is the chosen refuge of Kubla the mighty, the emperor whose every whim is law, who would have temptations toward *hubris*. It is the center of his retreat in his haughty withdrawal from a world unworthy of him. It is above and beyond Nature, a "miracle of rare device" in which Man transcends and circumvents mere natural processes. It stands amid an enormous garden in which a considerable segment of wild nature is isolated and imprisoned for the delight of the human Kubla.

And there were gardens bright with sinuous  
rills,  
Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree;

And here were forests ancient as the hills,  
Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.

This description hints, however, that Nature here is an uneasy prisoner, or perhaps a prisoner who is bounded only during her own pleasure. The "forests ancient" suggest an existence unknown to man and uncoerced by human power, whose sway over it is temporary and precarious. It is a force and being unlike Man, busy about its own purposes and, like the serpent, inscrutable in the labyrinthine wanderings of the "sinuous rills" of the gardens.

Here one may affirm that this setting illustrates a typical Romantic conception of "the reconciliation of opposites" by means of a concrete, visual scene. By a process of shading and gradation in light and dark, in garden and forest, oppositions become blended, interfused, and unified; and this visual unification extends to the feelings and ideas which the scene evokes. This is the Romantic "picturesque," more fully to be seen in the landscape of Wordsworth's "Lines . . . above Tintern Abbey," with its complex blending of sky and valley, of Man and Nature, objectified in blending and gradation of color and form. In *Kubla Khan* the effect permits us simultaneously and with no sense of paradox or jar to receive the gardens as the elaborate plaything of a great potentate, the emblem of his pride, exclusiveness, and power, and also as an ironic commentary upon the impossibility of any real ownership of Nature.

These oppositions, however, are only a subtheme or prelude. The river is the true exemplar of nonhuman forces, subhuman and superhuman alike. Even the "deep romantic chasm" of its rising is incompatible with the order of Kubla's pleasure-grounds. It "slants athwart"; it cuts across the pattern. The simile of the "woman waiting for her demon-lover" invests it with the supernatural, the *Arabian Nights* wonder and fear of the jinni, beings unfriendly to man and yet obscurely connected with him.

Of the river itself most noticeable is the brevity of its surface course in rela-



tion to the hidden potentialities of its subterranean flowing:

Five miles meandering with a mazy motion  
Through wood and dale the sacred river ran,  
Then reached the caverns measureless to man  
And sank in tumult to a lifeless ocean. . .

Treated as a whole and in its relationship with the dome and the pleasure-grounds, the river is the primordial and the irrational, whatever lies beyond the control of the rational and conscious mind. The power of the source, vividly imaged in the dancing rocks—

And from this chasm, with ceaseless turmoil  
seething

As if this earth in fast thick pants were breathing,

A mighty fountain momentarily was forced  
Amid whose swift half-intermitted burst  
Huge fragments vaulted like rebounding hail,  
Or chaffy grain beneath the thresher's flail:  
And 'mid these dancing rocks at once and ever  
It flung up momentarily the sacred river . . .

— is a power beyond mortal man, even beyond Kubla Kahn. This source is creation and birth, a force and urge at once frenetic and turbulent and also rhythmical and regular. At the mouth is death, icy and lifeless, where Alph in tumult returns to the underground. As with the source, powers unknown and uncontrollable are at work, descending at last to quiescence. Here are potentialities not of death absolutely but relative to what can be imagined and experienced.

Thus the opposition between river and dome. But here we must shift our emphasis, as previously with the pleasure-grounds themselves, more fully to Alph. The river is human life, past, present, and future, birth, life, and death. For five miles it runs upon the surface, consents, "meandering with a mazy motion," to harmonize with the order of Kubla's estate, to yield to his power. It is like Bede's famous bird which flies in a moment through the warm hall, swiftly proceeding from unknown birth to unknown death. And Kubla in his pleasure-dome is Man, living in his special cosmos of palace and garden, but hearing

. . . the mingled measure

From the fountain and the caves. . . .

Impulses unaccountable, creative and deadly alike, comprehending more of life

than the reason can grasp. It is amid the tumult that Kubla hears the ominous prophecy of war, and this from the dying, the caves of ice. The poem as narrative can go no further than this, for the destruction is implied of Kubla's elaborate and artificial escape. The complex order and equilibrium of his existence are over-set by the mere hint. This statement implies, of course, that the pattern must not within the poem be broken and that Kubla is never to emerge from his walled pleasure-grounds.

Yet in an important sense the pattern is broken in that Coleridge continues the lyric but abandons the story. Suddenly the imagery shifts to the "damsel with a dulcimer." This damsel, the Abyssinian maid, is most simply comparable to the muse invoked by the classical poet. She has, as has been suggested, a relation to Milton's heavenly muse Urania, as the stimulating speculations about the source of "Mount Abora" indicate. It is valuable to compare her also, as does Miss Schneider, to Platonic inspiration, the *furor poeticus* of the bard. Appropriately, however, to Coleridge's Romanticism and to the special context of *Kubla Khan*, she is wild and remote, with the glamour and terror of a far-off, mysterious land, marvelous, inaccessible, yet rich with the significant associations of literature. So Keats in a lyric much akin to *Kubla Khan*:

I saw parched Abyssinia rouse and sing  
To the silver cymbals' ring!  
I saw the whelming vintage hotly pierce  
Old Tartary the fierce!—

The damsel is as well the ideal singer, the archetypal poet. The transmission of her song, if transmission there could be, would be like the conception of imitation in Longinus, where the divine fire passes from poet to poet, and Plato emulates Homer in the beneficent rivalry of genius. But Coleridge is modest, with the clear sense that the song can never be equaled:

Could I revive within me  
Her symphony and song,  
To such a deep delight 'twould win me  
That with music loud and long  
I would build that dome in air. . .

The phrase "deep delight" carries us into the problem of pleasure, more especially into the problem of the pleasure

which the particular poem *Kubla Khan* should provide. This delight is for Coleridge as well as Wordsworth the prerequisite of poetic creation, the imaginative joy and effluence described in "Dejection: An Ode." But here it is also an effect peculiar to the poem itself: a kind of magic, an apparently naïve delight in the presentation of wonders, and in gorgeous images evoked in imagination in the sort of pleasure suggested by the classic ancient accounts of Plato, Aristotle, and Longinus.

This pleasure is also partly from variety and fulness—wonders which satisfy, as for a child at a carnival. These qualities are embodied not only in the imagery but in fulness and variety of melodic movement in the verse, which would bear more thorough discussion than can be given here. The word "symphony" in line 43 is not lightly or carelessly used. The delight is rounded and completed by the dark tinge of the "deep romantic chasm," the turbulent power of the river, the doom of the ancestral voices, and lastly by the mingling of dread and enchantment in the closing lines, where the holiness of the inspired poet is in a sense unholy too, an affair as it were of the infernal gods as much as the clear deity of Apollo.

The interpretation in earlier pages has attempted to demonstrate an essential profundity and universality in the theme of *Kubla Khan*. It remains to assert that pleasure is in no way incompatible with significance. In some contemporary poetry and criticism there seems implicit the notion that it is somehow dishonest and shameful to please, an attitude which has tellingly been termed "the new Puritanism." One feels inclined to renew the old question, "Dost thou think, because thou art virtuous, there shall be no more cakes and ale?" But in *Kubla Khan*, as probably in all good Romantic poetry, the pleasure which draws us within the poem is also inseparable from its full meaning. Imaginative delight in the wonders of the pleasure-ground is indispensable to the sense of their opposite. Fully to appreciate the theme's potentialities, we must be beguiled into believing momentarily in the permanency of the impermanent, the possibility of the impossible. The

fullest meaning, a synthesis of antitheses, calls for feeling and imagination at full stretch, reconciled with intellectual scope and understanding. And pleasure, one may claim, is the basis and beginning of the process.

Our final contention re-emphasizes the depth and significance of *Kubla Khan*. It is in the truest sense a completed work, in that it symbolizes and comprehends the crucial Romantic dilemma. In a more obvious sense it is clearly unfinished: as a narrative it barely commences, and it shifts abruptly with the Abyssinian maid from objective to subjective. Considered as lyric, however, it is self-contained and whole. The Romantic poet as idealist and monist strives to include within his cosmos both actual and ideal, as in Coleridge, Wordsworth, Shelley, even Byron, and to some extent Keats. His attempt, however, co-exists with his consciousness that he seeks the unattainable; the ideal can never be fully actualized. Thus in good Romantic poetry there is a continuous tension, compacted of the sense of the immense potentialities of his theme set off against the knowledge that they can only partially be realized. This tension and conflict can be reconciled and rendered valuable partly by the poet's own belief in the value of the attempt itself. The poet excels himself as it were by force; he is stimulated to creation rather than falling into despair. Above all, he benefits by understanding and accepting his dilemma even while trying to rise above it nonetheless.

And this is eminently the case with *Kubla Khan*. Coleridge provides a scene and experience too fine for common nature's daily food. With exquisite judgment he forbears the attempt to explain what can only be hinted and dramatizes instead what is lost in the very fact of relinquishing it. But amid the master-artist's skilful manipulation of interest and suspense, his suggestions of "more than meets the eye," is the human interest, the complexity and spacious grasp, without which the rest would be nothing, could not separately exist. Properly understood, Romantic poetry is never a cheat, although it often labors under the disadvantage of being extremely agreeable.

## 1952: FESTE'S NIGHT

ALAN S. DOWNER

Of Shakespeare's romantic comedies, none has manifested a more robust stage life than *Twelfth Night*. Something about the mixture of the elements in it seems to present a perennial challenge to our actors and directors. We remember with the greatest pleasure the delightfully imaginative production conceived and played by Miss Jane Cowl, its setting the pages of a vast picture book turned, with great appropriateness, by Feste, the clown. We remember thankfully Miss Cowl's own performance in which the style and grace of her action and the rich music of her voice established the proper balance and blending of the romantic with the more boisterous elements of the play. We remember the Webster-Theatre Guild revival, with Miss Helen Hayes's tomboyish Viola and Maurice Evans' preposterous but somehow comically appropriate cockney steward. And we are constantly reminded by stage histories and volumes of memoirs of the *Twelfth Night* of Harley Granville-Barker, a revolution in the theory and practice of Shakespearean staging. This continuing success with twentieth-century audiences is history, but it is nonetheless surprising.

"LADY, YOU HAVE BEEN MISTOOK"

It is a little surprising, to begin with, that contemporary audiences who have delighted in a Freudian Hamlet and an anti-Fascist Brutus should take pleasure in a plot which involves so antiquated and unrealistic a device as the separation, wanderings, and reunion of identical twins. This can, I think, be seen in no enlightened way—it is a comic bolus, and the audience is required to swallow it or go to the movies. The Elizabethans, who had no choice, swallowed it without gagging; it was a conventional plot, and no doubt they agreed with Mr. Bayes that a plot was only an excuse to bring in fine things.

In *Twelfth Night*, to be sure, Shakespeare spares us much of the tedious

coming and going that characterize the two Antipholuses and the two Dromios of his earlier handling of the Twins Confused. Yet his plot insistently turns upon them: the mistaking of Sebastian for Viola brings about the public dénouement of the comic knot. Further, the confrontation of Sebastian and Viola, dressed in her brother's clothes, gives occasion for an *anagnoresis*.

In the last scene of *Twelfth Night* Viola stands face to face with her newly recovered twin, Sebastian. The two stand at a distance, savoring the pleasure of a quest about to be successfully concluded, and exchange their tokens: their father's name, the mole upon his brow, the date of his death, Sebastian's clothing. After wanderings, uncertainties, and confusions they luxuriate in the security of an undisguised truth, of certain reality.

But this is a recognition on more than one level. Sebastian's acknowledgment of Viola opens the stubbornly shut eyes of Orsino. He recognizes both the fact and, slowly, the truth behind the fact. At first he recalls only Viola's ambiguous declaration that she can never love woman as she does him and requests to see her in her woman's weeds, to see, as it were, an outward sign. A moment later, prompted by Olivia and his own recollection of Viola's devoted service, he offers her his hand in marriage. Perfunctory as the action is, we are nonetheless permitted to conclude that Orsino is at last acting realistically, that he no longer pursues the impossible she, the Unattainable Beloved, but recognizes the principle of a marriage of true minds.

"FOR SUCH DISGUISE AS HAPLY SHALL  
BECOME THE FORM OF MY INTENT"

The familiar convention of the Twins Confused is thus employed by Shakespeare for purposes beyond the convention. The unraveling of identities is not the end but the means to the end of his comedy. And, in order that the confusion

of brother and sister may be convincing, he is forced to resort to another convention of his stage, the "breeches role." Like the conventional recognition scene, however, the conventional disguise becomes essential both to the plot and to the basic idea of *Twelfth Night*.

Viola is most explicit as to the reasons for concealing her identity in man's clothing. Both she and the audience understand clearly the motive of her act; there is no self-deception involved. Yet this disguise, innocently undertaken for the best of reasons, works a certain amount of havoc. Poor Olivia is so charmed by Viola's "outside" that she loses her heart to a dream.

The question of truth is raised at once by Viola upon meeting Olivia. Olivia, you will recall, is "disguised"; Maria has thrown a veil over her face. To this veil Viola cannot address her prepared speech, since it refers to the beauty of the addressee, and at her request the veil is withdrawn that she may look at the picture. Her reaction is one of Shakespeare's most famous comic lines "Excellently done, if God did all." It is a good joke, but it is more: it is related to the central idea of God's handiwork gilded and distorted by the artifices of man. God has made Olivia beautiful and has also given her a natural function, but this she is apparently determined to avoid through her foolish decision to yield to "no kind of suit; No, not the Duke's."

Feste, too, is disguised both in costume and in behavior. His suit is motley, the uniform of the Fool, and he carries the tabor and perhaps the bauble as his badge of office. When, however, Olivia calls him a fool—and we must return to this scene again—he points out that "*Cuculus non facit monachum*." And as the man inside the monk's robe may be anything but a monk in spirit, so he, Feste, wears not motley in his brain. His disguise, like Viola's, is a kind of protection; he is an allowed fool and he may speak frankly what other men, in other disguises, must say only to themselves.

Two characters only in the play are notably undisguised. Sir Toby scorns to pretend that he is anything but what he

appears, and Sebastian exposes his identity openly on his first entrance. Sir Toby, to be sure, is frequently a little disguised by wine, yet his drunkenness only emphasizes his characteristic attitude: "Is this a world to hide virtues in?" He is disgusted with his niece for her foolish behavior, he flouts Malvolio as a poseur, and he savors freely all the good things, the cakes and ale, that life has to offer. The audience cannot fail to recognize in him a familiar type, taking life as it comes "all most natural," Maria's pun not intended.

Disguise, of course, is not merely a matter of costume and pose. When Viola informs her master that she is all the daughters of her father's house and all the brothers too, she is masking her meaning in words, in a riddle. "A fustian riddle" betrays Malvolio, and in the second wooing scene between Olivia and Viola there occurs a passage of stichomythia, a device of dialogue that had its origin in riddling speech:

OLIVIA: I prithee tell me what thou thinkest of me.

VIOLA: That you do think you are not what you are.

OLIVIA: If I think so, I think the same of you.

VIOLA: Then think you right. I am not what I am.

It is by words alone that Sir Toby maintains his ascendancy over Sir Andrew, by pun and false logic and sheer volubility convincing him that he is not what he is, an asshead and a coxcomb and a knave. By words alone he brings about the duel between Andrew and Viola and so fills each fencer with false ideas of the other's skill that both are defeated before a sword has been crossed. His facility with words traps him at last, bringing him into open conflict with Antonio and with Sebastian and forcing the surrender of his freedom to Maria as a recompense for her own cleverness in trapping Malvolio with a riddling letter.

Feste's whole art and function depend upon his talents as a "notable corrupter of words," and he has much wisdom to utter on what we should probably call the problem of semantics. He concludes

one wit combat by declaring that "words are grown so false that I am loath to prove reason with them." In many ways he is the central figure of the play, the symbol of its meaning. The plot could get on without him, no doubt; his practical function as message-bearer could be taken over by Fabian, who has little enough to keep him busy. But he is no mere embellishment. Without Feste, *Twelfth Night* would not be the enduring comedy it is but another romantic farce like *The Comedy of Errors*. *Twelfth Night* is Feste's night.

#### "A WISE MAN'S ART"

The Fool is as conventional in Shakespearean comedy as the intriguing slave or parasite in Plautus or Molière. But, while Feste shares some of the characteristics of Tranio-Phormio-Sganarelle, he does not, like them, dazzle our eyes by juggling the elements of the plot into a complex pattern which only he can sort out for the necessary fortunate conclusion. Until the last act of the play, he does little but jest or sing. But for all his failure to take a positive part in the intrigue—emphasized perhaps when he drops out of the baiting of Malvolio—for all that he is not, that is to say, a protagonist, he nonetheless propounds the theme which gives *Twelfth Night* its unity and makes a single work of art out of what might have been a gorgeous patchwork.

A brief examination of the matter of the comedy will suggest the basis for such a conclusion. *Twelfth Night* is compounded of two, perhaps three, "plots," more or less independent actions, each of which must be rounded off before the play is concluded. In the first, Duke Orsino's eyes must be opened to the true nature of love that he may marry Viola; in the second, Malvolio must be reduced from the deluded superman to fallible humanity; in the third, which is closely tied with the first, Sebastian must be substituted for Viola in the affections of Olivia.

The structure is skilfully contrived not only to keep all three plots going and maintain a reasonable connection among them but to emphasize the similarity of their themes. Like most panoramic drama,

the play may be divided into three organic movements rather than the meaningless editorial division into five acts. The first of these movements, from the introduction of Orsino to Viola's discovery that she has charmed Olivia (I, 1–II, 3), is concerned almost exclusively with establishing the triangular love affair. Toby, Andrew, and Maria are brought on to whet our appetites for their plot, and, just before the movement ends, Sebastian appears that we may be reassured all will come right before the play is over. However, we should note a speech of Feste's made to Maria during his first appearance (I, 5), in which he refers obliquely to the common subject of the separate actions: "If Sir Toby would leave drinking, thou wert as witty a piece of Eve's flesh as any in Illyria." If all were as it should be and according to the order of nature, Toby would wed Maria. But Toby drinks, and the Duke loves Olivia, and Olivia (as we shall see in a moment) loves Viola. All most unnatural.

In the second movement (II, 3–IV, 1) the love triangle remains unchanged, and the trapping of Malvolio occupies most of the action. We observe the offense for which he is to be punished, the plotting of revenge, and the success of the scheme. Sebastian has again made only a token appearance, but in the final scene of the movement (III, 4) all three actions are brought together with the greatest of ease as the deluded Malvolio is handed over to Toby, and Andrew and Viola are inveigled into a duel from which both are rescued by the intervention and arrest of Sebastian's friend, Antonio.

The final movement, the last two acts of the play, is in a sense Sebastian's. Mistaken for Viola, he brings about a fortunate unknotting of the love tangle, rescues his friend Antonio from the clutches of the Duke, and forces a confession of their machinations from Toby and company. The point to notice here is that Feste is the character who, innocently enough, drives Sebastian into Olivia's arms. It is Feste's only direct contribution to the action of the play; it is also the single decisive action which cuts the comic knot; and it is a visual dramatic symbol of his relationship to



the whole play. It is the action of a man whose professional function is to perceive and declare the true state of affairs in the face of scorn, threats, and discouragement from the self-deluded. Shakespeare has in fact prepared us for this action at several important points earlier in the play.

On his first appearance, with Maria, Feste demonstrates not only that he is able to more than hold his own in a wit combat but that he is shrewd enough to see the true state of affairs in the household. A moment later, with the license of an allowed fool, he is demonstrating to Olivia the folly of her resolution to withdraw from the world for seven years in mourning for her brother.

FESTE: Good madonna, why mournest thou?

OLIVIA: Good fool, for my brother's death.

FESTE: I think his soul is in hell, madonna.

OLIVIA: I know his soul is in heaven, fool.

FESTE: The more fool, madonna, to mourn for your brother's soul, being in heaven. Take away the fool, gentlemen [I, 5, 72-78].

The little passage is in the most artificial of dialogue forms, stichomythia, and it is perhaps only a bit of logic-chopping, but it presents the common-sense view of a sentimental and un-Christian attitude.

The exposure of Olivia takes place in the first movement of the play. In the second movement Feste undertakes to tell the Duke a few plain truths, but, since the undeceiving of the mighty is ticklish business, he goes about it in an oblique manner.

Shakespeare has introduced the Duke in a most ambiguous way. To him falls an opening speech as rich in texture and sound as any love poetry in the language. To him also falls an attitude that cannot fail to win both our admiration and our exasperation. We admire his constancy, that is, but are somewhat impatient with his refusal to "take his answer." Further, if we accept him at his own evaluation as presented in his speeches, his sudden switch to Viola in the last scene become pure comic convention without reason or meaning, a botched-up happy ending.

But, if we have been beguiled by our own sentimentality into sympathy with the Duke, Feste will set us right, and most particularly in that romantic scene

(II, 4) where he has been thrust in to sing the song which Viola seems not prepared to perform.<sup>1</sup> It is as early in the morning as the love-smitten Duke would arise from bed. He enters, calling at once for music, and requests Cesario (that is, Viola) for that "old and antique song" they heard last night. While his servant Curio goes in search of Feste to sing it, Orsino proceeds to analyze it for us. The description is famous and explicit:

It is old and plain,  
The spinsters and the knitters in the sun,  
And the free maids that weave their thread  
with bones,  
Do use to chant it. It is silly sooth,  
And dallies with the innocence of love  
Like the old age [II, 4, 44-49].

That is, a simple song, presumably a folk song or ballad, fit accompaniment to a household task. It is a love song, but not impassioned, not from the point of view of fervent youth. It dallies with the harmless pleasure of love as if the experience were but the memory of the old, a memory recollected in tranquillity. Whereupon Feste sings:

Come away, come away, death,  
And in sad cypress let me be laid.  
Fly away, fly away, breath;  
I'm slain by a fair cruel maid.  
My shroud of white, stuck all with yew,  
O prepare it!  
My part of death, no one so true  
Did share it.

In the second stanza the love imagery becomes more extravagant.

There has been much ingenuity expended on the search for an explanation for this awkward *non sequitur*. Possibly, we are dealing with a revision of the text in which the boy new-cast for Viola was less versatile than his predecessor. In that case the present interpretation is a further demonstration of the playwright's skill in making a virtue of necessity. It is intriguing also to speculate that, since Feste sings all the other songs in the play. Shakespeare in revising took this opportunity of tightening up his structure. But, barring the resurrection of Ireland or Collier, proof for such hypotheses can never be forthcoming, and, however happily we would welcome it, it is of secondary importance in dealing with a work of art as an entity in itself.

Not a flower, not a flower sweet,  
 On my black coffin let there be strown;  
 Not a friend, not a friend greet  
 My poor corpse, where my bones shall be  
 thrown.  
 A thousand, thousand sighs to save,  
 Lay me, O where  
 Sad, true lover ne'er find my grave,  
 To weep there.

Without the original music, which cannot be traced, it is impossible to say for certain, but, from the striking difference between the song as anticipated and the song as sung, Feste seems to have been mocking, indirectly, the Duke's passion. "Come away, death" is indeed a love song, but it can hardly be said to dally with the innocence of love. This would explain the Duke's abrupt, "There's for the pains," and his immediate dismissal, not only of the singer,<sup>2</sup> but of his entire court. Perhaps he is afraid that there may have been some sniggering behind his back as Feste sang. There is just a hint in the play that his household is a little wearied of his unavailing pursuit of Olivia.

And Feste, going off, dares a parting thrust. "Now the melancholy god protect thee," he says, and bids him put to sea to make a good voyage of nothing. In this scene, I suggest, Feste "exposes" the Duke as he has earlier exposed Olivia. By mocking them both, he points out that their loves are sentimental and foolish. And the Duke, unlike Olivia, is angry. He dismisses his attendants and sends Viola once more to "same sovereign cruelty," with a stubborn determination to act out the role he has cast himself in.

With this as a clue to his character, the actor of course has it in his power to make evident the Duke's melancholy, his fashionable love-sickness, from the start. In the first scene, even in his gorgeous opening set-piece, he is plainly worshiping love for its own sake and fostering his emotion for sentimental purposes. His first words demand that the music play on, that he may experience again his pleasurable mood of Thwarted Lover. For all the beauty of the

verse, the attitude is distinctly unhealthy. He must have music for his love to feed on, even upon arising in the morning; or, for a substitute, a garden of sweet-scented flowers. And is he not, like Romeo in the throes of puppy love for the equally unresponsive Rosaline, "best when least in company"?

The parallel exposing of Malvolio, which is capped by Feste in the third movement, is the clearest statement of the theme in action, since it is unencumbered by romantic love, an element which can blind an audience to the true state of affairs as effectively as it can blind the romantic lovers. Malvolio, in this play, is plain text. As Olivia's steward he is sufficiently in charge of her affairs to bring suit against a sea captain for dereliction of duty; as her butler, he is ready with falsehoods to defend her privacy; as her would-be husband, he has prepared schemes for the proper and efficient conduct of their household. These are all admirable traits for his several capacities: the alert businessman, the devoted servant, the careful husband. But there is a fault in him, an obvious fault. There is something too much of the cold gaze from half-shut eyes down the prominent beak, something too much of the demure travel of regard. Malvolio would not only be virtuous, he would have others so, and he would define the term. It is a cause of delight to discover that the elegant creature with snow-broth in his veins, so superior to the drunken carousing of Toby, the witty trifling of Feste, the dalliance of Olivia—that this man of virtue is only human, like ourselves. And in this exposure, that the whirligig of time may bring his revenges, Feste is permitted to play the visually dominant part.

The action is so arranged that, of all the conspirators, only Feste has a scene alone with Malvolio, in which, for nobody's pleasure but his own, he teases and torments the benighted steward and reduces the proud man to a state of wretched groveling: "I tell thee," cries Malvolio at last, "I am as well in my wits as any man in Illyria," and Feste replies, "Well-a-day that you were, sir."

This does not seem to be idly spoken. Feste is saying that he wishes Malvolio

<sup>2</sup>With a formula which is exactly duplicated only in Henry IV's angry dismissal of his subordinate nobles.

were not sick of self-love but like a normal Illyrian. Like Toby, for example, who would go to church in a galliard and return in a coranto, and whose fair round belly symbolizes his philosophy, that there is a place for cakes and ale even in a world turning Puritan. The point is made simply and emphatically, with Feste *solus* on the stage, and Malvolio perhaps clamoring behind the Judas window of the stage door: the Elizabethan equivalent of a motion-picture close-up—on Feste.

Thus it is Feste's function in both parts of the action to make plain to the audience the artificial, foolish attitudes of the principal figures. Malvolio loves himself, Orsino loves love, and Olivia loves a ghost. This, says Feste, is unnatural, against common sense. In this similarity of situation and Feste's single-minded attitude in each case lies the unity of *Twelfth Night*, its theme.

Feste states it clearly. Since he is primarily a singing fool, he states it in song:

What is love? 'Tis not hereafter;  
Present mirth hath present laughter. . . .  
Youth's a stuff will not endure.

Feste's philosophy is as old as the hills, as old as the comic attitude, the acceptance of the facts of life. His philosophy, however, goes somewhat deeper than a mere sentimental optimism.

Journeys end in lovers' meeting  
Every wise man's son doth know.

As a wise man's son, or as an understanding fool, he sees to it that there shall be a meeting of true lovers at the end of the journey of Viola and Sebastian. In his scene with Malvolio he even discards his priestly disguise and appears in his own motley to restore the vision of the self-blinded man. And, by his introduction of Sebastian to Olivia, he makes possible the shedding of all disguises both physical and spiritual at the dénouement.

Critical opinion has been somewhat divided about Feste. There is general agreement about his remarkable clean-spokenness; he has been called the merriest of Shakespeare's fools, and the loneliest. He has been taken to be the symbol of misrule that governs the *Twelfth Night* activities. Yet, when the recognition scene is

over, all the characters romantically paired off, Malvolio reduced to a very human bellow—"I'll be revenged on the whole pack of you!"—and Feste prepares to sing his foolish little epilogue, does he not seem to be something more than merry, or lonely, or the spirit of misrule?

Observe him, alone on the great stage which is the emptier for the departure of the grandly dressed ladies and gentlemen who have crowded it during the last scene, and the quieter after the vigorous excitement that attended the dénouement: the twins united, the marriage and betrothal, the explosion of Malvolio, the brawling of Andrew and Toby. Feste is perhaps older than the other characters, "a fool that the Lady Olivia's father took much delight in." But he has been, for a fool, a rather quiet character; no loud, bawdy jokes and very little slapstick. His brain is not parti-colored: *cucullus non facit monachum*. As Viola observes:

This fellow's wise enough to play the fool,  
And to do that well craves a kind of wit.  
He must observe their mood on whom he jests,  
The quality of persons and the time;  
Not, like the haggard, check at every feather  
That comes before his eyes. This is a practice  
As full of labor as a wise man's art.

It is the function of this fool to speak the truth, however quizzically he must phrase it. It is his task to persuade his lord and lady *not* to be fools. It is the task of comedy, too.

And now he is alone. Now he sings his lonely, foolish song:

When that I was and a little tiny boy  
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain, etc.

Perhaps it is not so foolish. There is one constant thing in this world, he says, the facts of nature, the wind and the rain that raineth every day. Thieves may be shut out and evil men by bars and locks but not the rain that raineth every day. Like a true jester, he makes a little joke out of his moral. When he took a wife, he planned to be master in his own house, but nature defeated him, for it is the order of nature that men shall be henpecked, and suffer from hangovers, as surely as the rain shall fall. He emphasizes the antiquity of his wisdom:

A great while ago, the world began  
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain.

Then, with a quizzical smile, as if to say,  
"I have made my point, or the comedy has  
made it for me; no need to quote history—" *he slips into the epilogue pattern we have  
been awaiting:*

But that's all one, our play is done,  
And we'll strive to please you every day.

It is, after all, as he reminds us, just  
a play. But it has its purpose for being, just  
as the great tragedies have. *Twelfth Night*  
is Feste's night, and we may look to be well  
edified when the Fool delivers the Madmen.

## 1954: THE POETRY OF DYLAN THOMAS

DAVID DAICHES

The sudden and premature death of Dylan Thomas produced elegies and appreciations in extraordinary numbers on both sides of the Atlantic. Thomas was the most poetical poet of our time. He talked and dressed and behaved and lived like a poet; he was reckless, flamboyant, irreverent, innocent, bawdy and bibulous. And his verse, too, had a romantic wildness about it that even the reader who could make nothing of it recognized as "poetic." In the February issue of the new *London Magazine* a 26-year-old British poet wrote a letter saying that Thomas represented the "archetypal picture of the Poet" for his generation, and that the death of this wild and generous character produced "something like a panic" in the world of letters. He was answered in the next issue of the magazine by a thirty-one-year-old poet who said that this was puerile nonsense and deplored what he called the "fulsome ballyhoo" which Thomas's death evoked on both England and America. There has perhaps been an element of ballyhoo in the recent spate of articles about Thomas; but sober critical judgment is difficult when one is writing of a brilliant young man who has died at the very height of his career (or at the very height of his promise: we shall never tell now). And surely the exaggeration of the sense of loss at the death of a poet is a sign of health in any culture. Now that the shock has in some degree worn off, however, we can turn more soberly to ask the question: What sort of poetry did Dylan Thomas write, and how good is it?

In a note to the collected edition of his poems, Thomas wrote: "These poems, with

all their crudities, doubts, and confusions, are written for the love of Man and in praise of God. . . ." And in his prologue to the same volume he proclaimed his intention of celebrating the world and all that is in it:

... as I hack  
This rumpus of shapes  
For you to know  
How I, a spinning man,  
Glory also this star, bird  
Roared, sea born, man torn, blood blest.  
Hark: I trumpet the place,  
From fish to jumping hill! Look:  
I build my bellowing ark  
To the best of my love  
As the flood begins,  
Out of the fountainhead  
Of fear, rage red, manalive, . . .

This prologue is a great hail to the natural world, and man as a part of it, and might be taken by the careless reader as an impressionist outpouring of celebratory exclamations:

Huloo, my prowed dove with a flute!  
Ahoy, old, sea-legged fox,  
Tom tit and Dai mouse!  
My ark sings in the sun  
At God speeded summer's end  
And the flood flowers now.

Yet in fact this spontaneous-seeming poem is a cunningly contrived work in two movements of fifty-one lines each, with the second section rhyming backwards with the first—the first line rhyming with the last, the second with the second last, and so on, the only pair of adjacent lines rhyming being the fifty-first and the fifty-second. Whether the ear catches this complicated cross rhyming or not, it is part of a cunning

pattern of ebb and flow, of movement and counter-movement, which runs through the poem. This single piece of evidence is perhaps enough to prove that, for all the appearance of spontaneity and sometimes of free association that his poems present to some readers, Thomas was a remarkably conscientious craftsman for whom meaning was bound up with pattern and order. No modern poet in English has had a keener sense of form or has handled stanzas and verse paragraphs—whether traditional or original—with more deliberate cunning.

It is worth stressing this at the outset, because there are still some people who talk of Thomas as though he were a writer of an inspired mad rhetoric, of glorious, tumbling, swirling language, which fell from his pen in magnificent disorder. He has been held up by some as the antithesis of Eliot and his school, renouncing the cerebral orderliness of the 1920's and the 1930's in favour of a new romanticism, an engaging irresponsibility. And on the other hand there are those who discuss his poems as though they are merely texts for exposition, ignoring the rhyme scheme and the complicated verbal and visual patterning to concentrate solely on the intellectual implications of the images. The truth is that Thomas is neither a whirling romantic nor a metaphysical imagist, but a poet who uses pattern and metaphor in a complex craftsmanship in order to create a ritual of celebration. He sees life as a continuous process, sees the workings of biology as a magical transformation producing unity out of identity, identity out of unity, the generations linked with one another and man linked with nature. Again and again in his early poems he seeks to find a poetic ritual for the celebration of this identity:

Before I knocked and flesh let enter,  
With liquid hands tapped on the womb,  
I who was shapeless as the water  
That shaped the Jordan near my home  
Was brother to Mnetha's daughter  
And sister to the fathering worm.

Or again:

The force that through the green fuse drives  
the flower  
Drives my green age; that blasts the roots  
of trees  
Is my destroyer.

And most clearly of all:

This bread I break was once the oat,  
This wine upon a foreign tree  
Plunged in its fruit;  
Man in the day or wind at night  
Laid the crops low, broke the grape's joy. . . .  
This flesh you break, this blood you let  
Make desolation in the vein,  
Were oat and grape  
Born of the sensual root and sap;  
My wine you drink, my bread you snap.

Man is locked in a round of identities; the beginning of growth is also the first movement towards death, the beginning of love is the first move towards procreation which in turn moves toward new growth, and the only way out of time's squirrel-cage is to embrace the unity of man with nature, of the generations with each other, of the divine with the human, of life with death, to see the glory and the wonder of it. If we ignore the cosmic round to seize the moment when we think we have it, we are both deluded and doomed:

I see the boys of summer in their ruin  
Lay the gold tithings barren,  
Setting no store by harvest, freeze the soils;  
There in their heat the winter floods  
Of frozen loves they fetch their girls,  
And drown the cargoed apples in their tides.  
Those boys of light are curdlers in their folly,  
Sour the boiling honey; . . .

This is from an early poem; and several of these early poems strike this note—the note of doom in the midst of present pleasure, for concealed in each moment lie change and death. Thomas did not rush towards the celebration of unity in all life and all time which later became an important theme of comfort for him; he moved to it through disillusion and experiment. The force that drives the flower and the tree to full burgeoning and then to death, would destroy him also. Only later came the realisation that such destruction is no destruction, but a guarantee of immortality, of perpetual life in a cosmic eternity:

And death shall have no dominion.  
Dead men naked they shall be one  
With the man in the wind and the west  
moon;  
When their bones are picked clean and the  
clean bones gone,



They shall have stars at elbow and foot;  
 Though they go mad they shall be sane,  
 Though they sink through the sea they shall  
   rise again;  
 Though lovers be lost love shall not,  
 And death shall have no dominion.

It is this thought that sounds the note of triumph in "Ceremony after a Fire Raid" and which provides the comfort in "A Refusal to Mourn the Death, by Fire, of a Child in London."

"A Refusal to Mourn" is a poem worth pausing at, for it illustrates not only a characteristic theme of what might be called the middle Thomas, but also a characteristic way of handling the theme. The poem is ritualistic in tone; its dominant images are sacramental; and the cunningly contrived rise and fall of the cadence of each stanza adds to the note of formal ceremony. There are four stanzas, the first two and one line of the third containing a single sentence which swells out to a magnificent surge of meaning. Then, after a pause, the final stanza makes a concluding ritual statement, an antiphonal chant answering the first three stanzas. The paraphrasable meaning of the poem is simple enough: the poet is saying that never, until the end of the world and the final return of all things to their primal elements, will he distort the meaning of the child's death by mourning. One dies but once, and through that death becomes re-united with the timeless unity of things. But the paraphrasable meaning is not, of course, the meaning of the poem, which is expanded at each point through a deliberately sacramental imagery while at the same time the emotion is controlled and organized by the cadences of the stanza. The first stanza and a half describes the end of the world as a return from differentiated identity to elemental unity:

Never until the mankind making  
 Bird beast and flower  
 Fathering and all humbling darkness  
 Tells with silence the last light breaking  
 And the still hour  
 Is come of the sea tumbling in harness  
 And I must enter again the round  
 Zion of the water bead  
 And the synagogue of the ear of corn

Shall I let pray the shadow of a sound  
 Or sow my salt seed  
 In the least valley of sackcloth to mourn  
 The majesty and burning of the child's  
   death. . . .

There is no obscurity here, to anybody who knows Thomas's idiom. We have only to recall "This bread I break was once the oat" to realise the significance of the first three lines of the second stanza. The water bead and the ear of corn are symbolic primal elements, to which all return at the end. But why "Zion of the water bead" and "synagogue of the ear of corn"? The answer is simply that these are sacramental images intended to give a sacramental meaning to the statement. It is a kind of imagery of which Thomas is very fond (one can find numerous other examples, among them such a phrase as "the parables of sun light" in "Poem in October" or his use of Adam and Christ in his earlier poems). One might still ask why he says "synagogue" and not "church." The answer, I think, is that he wants to shock the reader into attention to the sacramental meaning. A more everyday religious word might pass by as a conventional poetic image; but "synagogue" attracts our attention at once; it has no meaning other than its literal one, and therefore can be used freshly in a non-literal way. The third stanza continues:

I shall not murder  
 The mankind of her going with a grave truth  
 Nor blaspheme down the stations of her  
   breath  
 With any further  
 Elegy of innocence and youth.

Here words like "mankind," "blaspheme," "stations of her breath" (recalling "station of the Cross") play an easily discernible part in the expansion of the meaning, while the pun in "grave truth" represents a device common enough in modern poetry. The concluding stanza gives the reason, the counterstatement:

Deep with the first dead lies London's  
   daughter,  
 Robed in the long friends,  
 The grains beyond age, the dark veins of  
   her mother,  
 Secret by the unmourning water  
 Of the riding Thames.  
 After the first death, there is no other.

This echoes, in its own way, the opening stanza; but its tone is new; it is that of liturgical proclamation. We need not wince at the suggestion that "long friends" means (among other things) worms; worms for Thomas were not disgusting, but profoundly symbolic: like maggots they are elements of corruption and thus of reunification, of eternity.

How much a poem of this kind owes to the imagery and to the cadence, as well as to the careful patterning, can be seen at once if one takes the perhaps extreme method of turning its paraphrasable content into conventional rhymed verse:

Not until doomsday's final call  
And all the earth returns once more  
To that primaevial home of all,  
When on that insubstantial shore  
The tumbling primal waters foam  
And silence rules her lonely home,

And I return to whence I came,  
The sacramental child of earth,  
Joining with nature to proclaim  
A death that is a second birth—  
No, not until that final sleep  
Will I for this dead infant weep.

She lies with her ancestral dead,  
The child of London, home at last  
To earth from whence all life is bred  
And present mingles with the past.  
The unmourning waters lap her feet:  
She has no second death to meet.

This is doggerel, of course, but it contains, in however crude a form, the essential paraphrasable meaning of the Thomas poem—yet misses everything of any significance about it. The note of ritual, of sacrament, of celebration, achieved through his special use of imagery and by other devices, is central in Thomas's poetry.

I have not given a critical analysis of the poem, which space forbids, but merely suggested a way of looking at it. "A Refusal to Mourn" is a characteristic poem of one phase of Thomas's career, during which he was drawing together his impressions of the unity of all creation and all time to serve the purpose of a specific occasion. His earlier poems often fail by being too packed with metaphor suggestive of identity. Words like "Adam," "Christ," "ghost," "worm," "Womb," phrases like "the mouth of time," "death's feather," "beach of flesh,"

"hatching hair," "half-tracked thigh," abound, and though each has its orderly place in the poem the reader often feels dulled by the continuous impact of repeated words of this kind. The sonnet-sequence, "Altarwise by owl-light," contains some brilliant identifying imagery (suggesting the identity of man with Christ, of creation with death, of history with the present), but it is altogether too closely packed, too dense, to come across effectively. The opening is almost a self-parody:

Altarwise by owl-light in the half-way house  
The gentleman lay graveward with his furies;  
Abaddon in the hangnail cracked from Adam,  
And, from his fork, a dog among the fairies,  
The atlas-eater with a jaw for news,  
Bit out the mandrake with to-morrow's  
scram. . . .

The careful explicator will be able to produce informative glosses on each of these phrases, but the fact remains that the poem is congested with its metaphors, and the reader is left with a feeling of oppression. A fair number of Thomas's earlier poems are obscure for this reason. It is not the obscurity of free association or of references to private reading, but an obscurity which results from an attempt to pack too much into a short space, to make every comma tell, as it were. With his continuous emphasis on birth, pre-natal life, the relation of parent to child, growth, the relation of body and spirit, of life to death, of human and animal to vegetable, and similar themes, and his constant search for devices to celebrate these and identify them with each other, he does not want one word to slip which may help in building up the total pattern of meaning. One of his poems shows how the making of continuous connections and identities can bewilder the reader:

To-day, this insect, and the world I breathe,  
Now that my symbols have outelbowed space,  
Time at the city spectacles, and half  
The dear, daft time I take to nudge the  
sentence,  
In trust and tale have I divided sense,  
Slapped down the guillotine, the blood-red  
double  
Of head and tail made witnesses to this  
Murder of Eden and green genesis.

He is saying here, in his compact meta-

phorical way, that expression in language (which means expression in time) breaks up and so distorts the original vision. In his desire to avoid that breaking up he sometimes piles up the images and metaphors until the reader simply cannot construe the lines (as in the sixth stanza of "When, like a Running Grace"). But it must be emphasised that this is not the fault of a bad romantic poetry, too loose and exclamatory, but comes from what can perhaps be called the classical vice of attempting to press too much into a little space.

Thomas progressed from those poems in which his techniques of identification are sometimes pressed too far, through a period of "occasional" verse in which he focussed his general notions on particular incidents and situations to give a grave and formal ceremonial poetry. ("A Refusal to Mourn," "Do not go gentle into that good night," "On the Marriage of a Virgin," etc.) to a period of more limpid, open-worked poetry in which, instead of endeavouring to leap outside time into a pantheistic cosmos beyond the dimensions, he accepts time and change and uses memory as an elegiac device ("Poem in October," "Fern Hill," "Over Sir John's Hill," "Poem on His Birthday"). But these divisions are not strictly chronological, nor do they take account of all the kinds of verse he was writing. There is, for example, "A Winter's Tale," a "middle" poem, which handles a universal folk theme with a quiet beauty that results from perfect control of the imagery. It is far too long a poem to quote, and it needs to be read as a whole to be appreciated: it is one of Thomas's half dozen truly magnificent poems.

Another remarkable poem, which does not quite fit into my three-fold classification, is "Vision and Prayer," a finely wrought pattern-poem in two parts of six stanzas each. In no other poem has Thomas so successfully handled the theme of the identity of himself, everyman, and Christ. He imagines himself addressing the unborn Christ who, in his mother's womb, seems separated from himself by a "wall thin as a wren's bone." The infant in the next room replies, explaining that it is his destiny to storm out across the partition that separates

man from God, and the poet identifies himself with the glory and suffering of Christ's redemptive career. The first part of the poem blazes to a conclusion with a vision of the triumph and pain of Christ's death. The second movement begins in a slow, hushed, almost muttering cadence: the poet prays that Christ remain in the womb, for men are indifferent and wanton and not worth redemption. Let the splendour of Christ's martyrdom remain unrevealed; "May the crimson/ Sun spin a grave grey/ And the colour of clay/ Stream upon his martyrdom." But as he ends this sad prayer the sun of God blazes forth and takes up the poet in its lightning. "The sun roars at the prayer's end." No summary or partial quotation can do justice to the force and brilliance of this most cunningly modulated poem. The stanzas of the first part are diamond-shaped, and those of the second part hour-glass shaped, and this visual device is not arbitrary, but reflects and answers the movement of the thought and emotion at each point.

Of the more limpid, open-worked poems of the third period, "Poem in October" (though written earlier than the others in this group) can stand as an excellent example. The poet, on his thirtieth birthday, is remembering his past and seeing himself in the familiar Welsh landscape as a boy with his mother:

It was my thirtieth year to heaven  
Woke to my hearing from harbour and  
neighbour wood  
And the mussel pooled and the heron  
Priested shore  
The morning beckon  
With water praying and call of seagull and  
rook  
And the knock of sailing boats on the net  
webbed wall  
Myself to set foot  
That second  
In the still sleeping town and set forth.

Again we have the sacramentalising of nature ("heron priested shore") and we have also a sense of glory in the natural world which Thomas learned to render more and more effectively as his art matured. Again, one cannot see the quality of the poem from an extract; elegy is combined with remembrance and commemora-

tion, and the emotion rises and falls in a fine movement.

Thomas's most recently published work is his radio play, "Under Milk Wood," which was broadcast by the B.B.C.'s Third Programme some months ago and won instant approval among professional critics and laymen alike. In writing for the radio Thomas naturally avoided any too close packing of the imagery, and chose a style closer to that of "Poem in October" than to that of his earlier poems. In spite of an occasional touch of sentimentality, "Under Milk Wood" is a remarkable performance—one of the few examples in our time of spoken poetry<sup>1</sup> which is both good and popular. In estimating the loss to literature of Thomas's early death, I should be inclined to put the cutting short of his career as a poet for the radio as the most serious of all. Thomas was by instinct a popular poet—as he wrote:

Not for the proud man apart  
From the raging moon I write  
On these spendthrift pages  
Nor for the towering dead  
With their nightingales and psalms  
But for the lovers, their arms  
Round the griefs of the ages,  
Who pay no praise or wages  
Nor heed my craft or art.

"I call the language of "Under Milk Wood" poetry, though it is prose to the eye. When I wrote this, I had *heard* the play twice but I had not read it, and there is no doubt that to the ear it is poetry. The opposite it true of T. S. Eliot's later plays, where the language is verse to the eye but prose to the ear.

He had no desire to be difficult or esoteric. He drew on the Bible and on universal folk themes rather than on obscure late classical writers or Jessie Weston's "From Ritual to Romance." In "Under Milk Wood" he put into simple yet powerful and cunning verse a day in the life of a Welsh village, with each character rendered in terms of some particular human weakness or folly. Unlike Eliot, Thomas accepted man as he was: he had a relish for humanity. By the end of his life he had learned to be both poetically honest and poetically simple—a difficult combination, especially in our time. And in choosing the spoken verse of the radio as a medium he was pointing the way towards a bridging of the appalling gap in our culture between professional critic and ordinary reader.

Was he a great poet? Against him it can be argued that his range was severely limited, that (in his earlier poems) he overdid a handful of images and phrases to the point almost of parodying himself, that many of his poems are clotted with an excess of parallel-seeking metaphors. I doubt if he wrote a dozen really first-rate poems (they would include, among those not hitherto mentioned here, "In the White Giant's Thigh" and "In Country Sleep"). In his favour it can be claimed that at his best he is magnificent, as well as original in tone and technique, and that he was growing in poetic stature to the last. Perhaps the question is, in the most literal sense, academic. It is enough that he wrote some poems that the world will not willingly let die.

## 1956: HAWTHORNE AND FAULKNER

RANDALL STEWART

The subject of this paper was first broached by George Marion O'Donnell in a pioneering essay, "Faulkner's Mythology" (*Kenyon Review*, Summer 1939), where he dropped the comment that "Mr. Faulkner resembles Nathaniel Hawthorne in a great many ways." The suggestion, merely thrown out by O'Donnell, has since been picked up by Malcolm Cowley,

Richard Chase, and others, and has received a rather general endorsement, but without any attempt (so far as I know) to extend the endorsement beyond a sentence or two. The present paper attempts to extend it to a few pages.

The assertion of similarity between two authors apparently so dissimilar was a little surprising to many of us, I imagine, when

we first read it back in 1939. The contrasts indeed are flagrant enough when these two writers are juxtaposed: reticence is contrasted with a shocking frankness, obscenity even; readability with abstruseness; normal narrative procedure with complicated time arrangements; authorial omniscience with the stream of consciousness; a style calm and restrained with passionate, dithyrambic utterance. It is hardly worth while to pursue these obvious differences beyond saying that they stem from fairly obvious causes: if Hawthorne had the Puritan coldness, Faulkner belongs to the passionate South; if Hawthorne inherited a neo-classic neatness and objectivity, Faulkner reflects the experimentation and subjectivity of the age of Joyce; if Hawthorne was cabined, cribbed, and confined in Victorian genteelness, Faulkner has enjoyed the new freedom of subject and treatment which was won chiefly by exponents of naturalism (like Dreiser) earlier in the century. Paradoxically, although Faulkner's works could hardly be what they are had they not been preceded by the great works of Dreiser and the other naturalists, Faulkner, in a deeper sense, represents a break with naturalism and a return to the older tradition of Hawthorne.

The similarities, indeed, are more interesting and significant than the differences, and it will be more rewarding to do our exploring in that direction.

Perhaps I should say that I am not concerned with "influences." I have made no attempt to ascertain whether Faulkner likes Hawthorne, or has read him much, or little, or not at all. It is true that Faulkner's first volume (which consists of quite undistinguished verse) was entitled *The Marble Faun*, but I do not attach much importance to this fact. For the purposes of this paper, the extent of his acquaintance with Hawthorne is of no great consequence, for we are concerned not so much with actual influence as with a common view of the human condition. It cannot be too much insisted upon, I think, that the common view of the human condition held by these two writers is the point to be emphasized most in a comparative study such as I am trying to suggest or adumbrate. And it is particularly

noteworthy that Faulkner, in recapturing the older view of Hawthorne, overleaped not only a century, but the whole naturalistic movement which appeared so triumphant at the time when he began to write.

Germane to our subject are the two regions, and the relation of each author to his respective region. The South in the second quarter of the present century (and after) resembled in many ways New England a century earlier. In both cases, a rampant industrialism was transforming the traditional social structure. A marked progressivism was in the air. Making money had become very important. Abbot Lawrence said to Daniel Webster in 1828, "If we can get this tariff through Congress, we will put the West and the South in debt to New England for a hundred years." It was a true prediction, but by the expiration of that period, a good deal of New England's wealth had moved to the South, and the South was trying to figure out ways by which she might put New England in her debt. The whirligig of Time was bringing in his revenges. Descendants of proud old families in the South, as formerly in New England, were caught up in the money craze. It would be interesting to compare Jaffrey Pyncheon and Jason Compson as representatives of the money mania in their respective regions and epochs. Both are rats in a rat-race, and both are treated by their authors about as contemptuously as any characters one is likely to meet with anywhere in fiction.

(Incidentally, it would be interesting to compare also two brilliant, incisive works of social criticism dealing with these progressive eras: one with the advancing South, and the other, a century earlier, with advancing New England. I refer to *Walden* and *I'll Take My Stand*. Thoreau's lament—"Will the division of labor never end?"—is a lament in which the Nashville Agrarians joined heartily.)

If the regions are comparable, the relations of the two authors to their respective regions are comparable, too. Both are loyal sons, inheritors, patriots. Faulkner is the more ardent celebrator. The passage (in *Intruder in the Dust*) about the



Southern boy who imagines Gettysburg still unfought is justly famous:

For every Southern boy fourteen years old, not once but whenever he wants it, there is the instant when it's still not yet two o'clock on that July afternoon in 1863, the brigades are in position behind the rail fence, the guns are laid and ready in the woods and the furled flags are already loosened to break out and Pickett himself with his long oiled ringlets and his hat in one hand probably and his sword in the other looking up the hill waiting for Longstreet to give the word and it's all in the balance, it hasn't happened yet. . . .

Justly famous also is the passage (in *The Bear*) which celebrates the Southern seasons and the Southern fertility:

. . . this land this South for which He [God] had done so much with woods for game and streams for fish and deep rich soil for seed and lush springs to sprout it and long summers to mature it and serene falls to harvest it and short mild winters for men and animals. . . .

Faulkner abounds in passages like these.

Hawthorne is less ardent but none the less doting. In his *Notebooks* he described the New England scenery with loving care. His New Englandism was intensified by his residence abroad. At the outbreak of the Civil War, he declared, "We never were a nation; New England is as large a lump of this earth as my heart can take in."

If Faulkner relived the Civil War Hawthorne relived the Witch Trials. Both had ancestors who had figured prominently in these momentous events. Both, too, are sensitively aware of the sin and the wrong—the sin of Negro slavery, the crime of Salem in 1692. Each, too (it may be added), had certain important lineal relations, as a writer, to the regional literature which preceded him. If Hawthorne's relation to his New England predecessors (to Cotton Mather, for example) is clearer than Faulkner's relation to his Southern predecessors (to G. W. Harris, for example), it is because the former subject has been a good deal more studied than the latter. The latter subject—a whole new field—has scarcely been studied at all.

Both Hawthorne and Faulkner see the past as inescapable, as one's inevitable inheritance. It was a romantic fallacy to suppose that the past could be brushed aside, a fresh start made, the world's great age begun anew. (It was a curiously American fallacy to suppose that the New World would produce sinless beings.) The inheritance of the Pyncheons and Maules, the Compsons and Sutpens, is an inexorable thing. In these writers, the past is not dead, it is not even past, it is a continuous living force.

Faulkner's past seems more colorful than Hawthorne's. Life in the house of the seven gables was a drab and mouldy affair. Young Holgrave (a progressive who later turned conservative) was oppressed by the weight of the Puritan centuries: "Shall we never get rid of this Past?" he exclaimed; "It lies upon the Present like a giant's dead body." Faulkner's past emphasizes the heroic, the chivalric, the romantic. Hightower cherished obsessively the vision of "wild bugles and clashing sabres and the dying thunder of hooves."

The New England past, however, was not without its heroisms to Hawthorne, less spectacular though they may have been. If Faulkner's heroic vision drew upon the Civil War, Hawthorne's went back to colonial times, and celebrated heroes like Endicott and the Gray Champion, whose exploits prefigured the great deeds of the American Revolution. "The Gray Champion," said the author, "is the type of New England's hereditary spirit; and his shadowy march on the eve of danger must ever be the pledge that New England's sons will vindicate their ancestry." Endicott was a hero when he tore the Red Cross from New England's banner. Yes, New England had her heroisms, too.

But human experience to these writers is ambiguous; its meaning is double. It is both heroic and unheroic, noble and ignoble, sublime and ridiculous. It was ridiculously ironic that Hightower's grandfather—the hero of the wild bugles, clashing sabres, and dying thunder of hooves—should have been shot and killed while raiding a chicken house. The two narratives which make up *The Bear* reflect this ambiguity: the fine traditionalism of the

hunting story contrasts sharply with the sordidness revealed by the old ledgers, and both the fine traditionalism and the sordidness are true. Hawthorne has no story with the dual structure of *The Bear* (a structure so admirably designed to show both sides of the picture, both halves of the truth), but he manages nevertheless to achieve a wholeness which does justice to both man's strength and his weakness. Hawthorne, like Faulkner, is very careful to check the debits against the credits. When you think he has given one of his characters a clean bill of health, look again, and you will see the telltale blemish, the sign of imperfection. The foot-travelers to the Celestial City (to take a small illustration from "The Celestial Railroad") would seem to have a better chance than most of escaping denigration, but Hawthorne reminds us that these candidates for sainthood prided themselves on their martyrdom, they liked it when Apollyon squirted the steam in their direction.

Much has been said of the heart-head antithesis in Hawthorne. His villains, like Ethan Brand, stand for the head. It is not, of course, that the author is opposed to the intellect *per se*, or that his fictions are arguments in behalf of that bugaboo of our time, anti-intellectualism. The stories are concerned, rather, with an imbalance between head and heart: Ethan Brand "became a fiend" because "his moral nature had failed to keep the pace of improvement with his intellect." But perhaps a character like Peter Hovenden in "The Artist of the Beautiful" is even more villainous than a great villain like Ethan Brand: he is shrewd, scheming, utterly cold, the foe of all generous acts, the arch-enemy of the beautiful. It is interesting to note that Faulkner's purest villain, Flem Snopes, is a somewhat similar sort of person. Flem is unheroic, acquisitive, cruel; nothing human or lovely can flourish within the scope of his blighting influence. It seems to me not a little remarkable that the actual descriptions of these two characters have certain points of similarity: Flem had "bright, quick, amoral eyes like a chipmunk"; Hovenden's facial expression, reproduced in the grandchild when he destroyed the butterfly, had a "certain odd sagacity," and of the child

at the moment when he most perfectly re-incarnated his grandfather, Robert Danforth whispered to his wife, "How wise the little monkey looks!"

Contrasted with villains like Flem Snopes and Jason Compson are the idiot Benjy and the Negress Dilsey, who are beatified at the Easter Service, where Benjy sat "rapt in his sweet blue gaze," and Dilsey cried "rigidly and quietly in the annealment and the blood of the remembered lamb." These redemptive characters, these symbols of innocence and goodness, stand at the opposite pole from the Jasons and the Snopeses and point the way to Christ and salvation.

Hawthorne has no characters quite like Benjy and Dilsey. His chief exemplar of pure innocence is the early Donatello. But the problem of evil dominates the works of both writers. Both writers are concerned with the fall of man, with man's struggle toward redemption, with the regeneration occasioned by sin itself, with the *felix culpa*. "Is sin, then, like sorrow," Kenyon asks in *The Marble Faun*, "an element of human education, through which we struggle to a higher and purer state than we could otherwise have attained?" It is a question which might be inscribed as an epigraph to the writings of both Hawthorne and Faulkner.

For man's struggle toward redemption is the grand subject of both. Faulkner said in the Stockholm speech, "I believe that man will prevail." A reviewer in the *New Yorker* magazine professed to be puzzled by the word *prevail*, and decided that it is vague and meaningless. I would suggest, however, that it might be helpful to look up the word in Cruden's *Concordance to the Bible*, and then read the passages (there are 65 altogether) in which it occurs. In general, *prevail* occurs in contexts where a victory is won with God's help. *Prevail*, as Faulkner uses it, has nothing to do with modern technology; it is a Biblical word, and has a religious, or Biblical, connotation.

Prevailing in Faulkner is never an easy matter. His protagonists are nearly always surrounded by hell and high water. But they tower, they enhance our conception of the human potential. This is perhaps what John Crowe Ransom meant

when he said that Faulkner shows us man "under the aspect of magnificence."

Does Hawthorne ever quite show us man under the aspect of magnificence? Do his important actors ever quite tower? There is indeed a more marked heroic strain in Faulkner; moving accidents by flood and field; battle, murder, and sudden death. Faulkner's characters have a Shakespearean super-stature which Hawthorne's characters seem to lack. It would be untrue, however, to say that Hawthorne's characters totally lack this kind of appeal. I shall not call the roll, looking for candidates, but content myself with nominating one person to stand with the battle-scarred, distraught, bedeviled heroes of Faulkner—Arthur Dimmesdale. Arthur's stature, it seems to me, has been greatly underestimated. While his paramour has been admired for her strength, Arthur has been despised for his weakness, yet Hester never did anything which required a tithe of the courage which Arthur's last sermon and confession required. If he walked less firmly than Hester, his burden was much heavier. Hester's struggle with the community was infinitely less torturous than Arthur's struggle with himself. It is a far cry—at least on the surface—from Arthur Dimmesdale to Joe Christmas, but Dimmesdale is perhaps the one Hawthorne character who can be compared with Christmas, who would have understood him, and who exemplifies with something approaching Faulknerian power the destruction wrought by civil war within the soul.

We read these two writers allegorically. This approach to Hawthorne was recognized almost from the start, but it was not at first recognized as appropriate to Faulkner, because many readers insisted (and some perhaps still insist) upon reading him as sociology, as a report on "conditions" in the South. But his work now, like Hawthorne's, is seen by most readers to be not so much a sociological record of a particular region, as a report on the

human race. Recent criticism has done much to elaborate and enrich the symbolical interpretation of both Hawthorne and Faulkner. The last decade or so has been indeed a golden age in criticism for both of these authors. More than most authors, both Faulkner and Hawthorne compel a symbolical reading.

We see these two writers, finally, as working in the orthodox Christian tradition, a tradition which posits original sin. It doesn't much matter, perhaps, whether the tradition is called Protestant or Catholic, Calvinist or Augustinian, though it is probably true that both authors (whether consciously or not) hark back to a view of Man and God which is older than the Protestant movement. Adherence to such a tradition was natural enough in Hawthorne's case (despite the heresies of the romantic age which surrounded him) because of his strong hereditary sense. Faulkner's adherence is not surprising either (despite the naturalistic amorality which dominated the early decades of this century) because certain fundamentalist beliefs had persisted longer in the South than elsewhere, and naturalism as a philosophy had failed to gain much of a foothold there. Religious liberals can with justice affix the label "Reactionary" to Hawthorne and Faulkner alike.

Faulkner said in the Stockholm speech that "the problems of the human heart in conflict with itself alone can make good writing because only that is worth writing about, worth the agony and the sweat." The remark is curiously reminiscent of Hawthorne, who said in the famous "Preface" to *The House of the Seven Gables* that the fiction writer "sins unpardonably" if he deviates from "the truth of the human heart." The business of writers like Hawthorne and Faulkner (as indeed of Shakespeare himself) is not to change the world, but to describe the human condition, to anatomize the human heart, to contemplate our common imperfections.

*The past and present wilt—I have fill'd them, emptied them,  
And proceed to fill my next fold of the future.*

Walt Whitman

## Round Table

### "BAR EXAMINATIONS" FOR NCTE MEMBERSHIP

ARTHUR L. BENSON & FRED GODSHALK  
*Educational Testing Service*

We have been asked to discuss proficiency examinations for English teachers from the point of view of testing specialists. Since the discussion will and must move from information to opinion, it may be helpful if we identify ourselves as the director of the National Teacher Examination program, and a specialist in the construction of English and verbal tests, respectively. We intend to give somewhat limited answers to the three questions of why, whether, and whither. The facts to be presented are derived chiefly from statistics contained in the *NTE Handbook for School and College Officials*, a publication intended for use in the interpretation of scores on the National Teacher Examinations.

The National Teacher Examinations consist of two series of tests. One of these, the Common Examinations, is designed to measure achievement in those aspects of general education and professional education common to both elementary school and secondary school teachers, regardless of their fields of specialization. The other series, called Optional Examinations, offers each candidate an opportunity to dem-

onstrate his knowledge of subject matter and of specific methods of teaching in his special field.

The Common Examinations comprise, first, a relatively long test of general professional information; next, three shorter general education tests—in English expression, in social studies, literature, and fine arts, and in science and mathematics; and last, a test of non-verbal reasoning. A "weighted" total score on the Common Examinations is reported for each candidate, as well as scores on each of the five tests of the battery. Currently, the average college senior preparing to teach achieves a weighted total score of about 585, and the total scores of half these seniors fall between 530 and 640. On each test the average senior achieves a scaled score of about 58, and half the candidates score between 51 and 65.

At the nationwide administration of the National Teacher Examinations in February, 1958, thirty-eight teacher education institutions with twenty-five or more seniors preparing to teach administered the examinations to a total of 3,115 seniors. Here are some selected data: At two institutions the average Common Examinations weighted total score attained by seniors was approximately 413, which is below the fifth percentile of the group as a whole. At five institutions, the average score attained was approximately 438. At eleven schools, the average score was about 613. At six institutions, the average score attained was about 638, which is close to the seventy-fifth percentile for the total group. One of the lower-ranking colleges produced no score by any senior that was as high as the lowest score attained at another institution.

This extreme variability of group performance by institutional candidates appears also in the separate tests, as indicated by the following: On the English Expression

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*This paper and the one by Eugene Slaughter which follows were delivered in longer versions at last year's NCTE convention as part of a panel growing out of Richard Braddock's article, "A Proposal for 'Bar Exams,'" CCC, May 1959.*

test, five institutions produced average scores of about 41, again close to the fifth percentile for the total group. On this test, one institution achieved an average score of 66, above the 70th percentile. On the Social Studies, Literature, and Fine Arts test one institutional group had an average score of 38, which is below the fifth percentile. On the same test, three other colleges produced prospective teachers whose average score was about 67, above the 80th percentile for the total group.

All the institutions referred to were accredited by their state departments of education, and presumably all seniors tested were granted teaching certificates upon their graduation in June, 1958. But there are extreme differences in the measurable qualifications of these prospective teachers.

The other kind of statistical information indicating need for constructive action makes some selected comparisons of seniors whose specialty is English with others preparing for different specialties. More than 40,000 candidates took the National Teacher Examinations during the five years 1954 to 1958, with sixteen teaching fields represented. More than 3,500 English teachers tested in these five years are represented in the total of the self-selected sample. In the average of Common Examinations weighted total scores attained, they rank third of the sixteen groups; physical science and mathematics teachers did slightly better than they. On the English Expression test they stand second, slightly lower than a group of approximately 1,000 teachers of foreign languages. The English teachers are highest in group average scores attained on the Social Studies, Literature, and Fine Arts test. They are tied for first place with teachers of physical science on the test of general professional information.

English teachers as a group are near the top of the teaching profession so far as these statistics can indicate general competence. But the range of abilities is again very striking: about one-fourth of the English group scored lower on the English Expression test than did the average teacher of other subjects, and ten percent of English teachers scored lower

than average teachers in a "non-academic" specialty. You will recall the fact that the English group is at the top on average scores for the Social Studies, Literature, and Fine Arts test; but again twenty-five percent of the group made scores below the average of teachers in other fields, and ten percent are lower than the average of teachers in the fields of the manual and practical arts. Finally, a considerable proportion of teachers with minor preparation in English achieve higher scores on the optional examination, English Language and Literature, than do those who have made major preparation for English teaching.

As we see it, the foregoing statistical information supports the notion that professional associations such as the NCTE have a legitimate concern to seek some means, in addition to those which now exist, for assuring the minimal competence of their professional membership.

Our second major concern is an examination of feasibility, or our attempt to answer the question of "whether or not" proficiency examinations will accomplish the basic purpose of upgrading professional competence. We believe a useful coordinating function in our special position of testing specialists is that of trying to insure a minimum of duplication of effort in the development of examination procedures. Obviously, the feasibility of any action contemplated by the NCTE is vitally affected by the maze of other professional organizations' projects pointing in the same direction, all of which have one common aspect: the lack of any common control or coordination. It is our opinion that the NCTE, and all other associations of specialists within the teaching profession, will take unilateral action to raise professional standards within the specialty only at great risk to the unity of the teaching profession as a whole. Co-operative planning is admittedly difficult; constructive action may well be too long delayed. But we should regret very much the prospect of the teaching profession breaking up into splinter groups, each concerned primarily with its own professional advancement, and perhaps achieving advancement and preferment at the expense of other



groups. We do not really need to be reminded that the entire profession fought long and hard for such uniformity as is represented by the requirement of the bachelor's degree for all teachers, by single salary schedules, by statewide minimum salary scales, by the reasonable equalization of teaching loads and assignments—all these standing as evidence of a unified profession operating within an institutional structure. These benefits can be jeopardized, and we think they should not be, by incautious action taken to raise the professional level of subject-matter specialists. It is our conviction that any plans to undergird minimum professional standards of English teachers must give recognition to the effects these plans will have on teachers in other fields and on the profession as a whole.

Our third and last matter of concern is the "whither" question. What direction should the NCTE take if it approves "bar exams" in principle, and what detours should it avoid?

Very briefly, we assume that there would be at least two kinds of membership in the NCTE, one of which might be called "professional" or perhaps more euphemistically "active," and the other "associate" or "affiliate." We assume further that important and reasonable assumptions concerning "grandfather clauses" would be made, as protection of the security of present members. We support these ideas as necessary, believing that they mark essential stages in the maturing of any true profession.

We support the need for realistically limited and definable functions for the proposed "bar exams." These would not include an attempt to identify superior teachers performing meritoriously in the classroom, the school, and the community. Like the other professions, we should do well to limit ourselves to the measurement of minimum intellectual competencies

which applicants can reasonably be expected to possess when they complete their formal preparation and their internship or probationary service.

We would propose also that in setting proficiency examinations, the NCTE and other specialty organizations concentrate upon the unique qualifications desirable for members to have. For instance, while it is desirable and important for English teachers to possess some defensible philosophy of the role of public education in a democratic society, this is no less true of teachers in other fields. If you do, as a temporary expedient, establish minimum qualifications for teachers in general, we hope that you will be eager to relinquish such measures as soon as minimum standards for teachers in general can be established under broader professional auspices.

The final point is a warning against the tempting bypath called "more research." From our experience it seems inevitable that further research will be strongly urged, as necessary prior to such a radical departure from past policies in the recruitment of new members. We believe in research, of course. But we are convinced that if research is to have any meaning, somewhere along the line somebody has to say that the research already accomplished has given us enough information to make some decisions, however tentative. We think that the professionalization of teaching has reached this stage. We suggest therefore that those who urge the continuation of the *status quo* pending the results of further research be required to describe in some detail the nature of the research they propose, the hypotheses they would seek to verify, and the action they would agree to take if these hypotheses were confirmed. If they leave such a reasonable proposal unanswered, questions concerning motives can be raised, and we have little doubt as to who would be found guilty of professional cynicism.

## A MODIFIED PROPOSAL FOR "BAR EXAMS"

EUGENE E. SLAUGHTER

In *College Composition and Communication*, May 1959, Richard Braddock proposed a qualifying examination for new members of the NCTE to ensure that they be reasonably well informed in their teaching field. I would modify his proposal. Briefly, my opinion is that qualifying examinations for teachers are desirable as a requirement for entrance into the profession, but they are not now acceptable either for teachers in general or for teachers of English. The teaching profession, I believe, should develop a feasible plan for the use of examinations which English teachers who have completed an appropriate college preparation must pass satisfactorily before they would be permitted to teach English as members of the profession. The NCTE would not need then to require a qualifying examination for membership.

Mr. Braddock and I agree on the reason for "bar exams," but not on the time when they should be used. We are dissatisfied with the quantity and quality of the preparation in English of many teachers who are assigned to teach it. We would propose the examinations as a test of ability and knowledge regarding the English language and its literature; we intend them to serve as a spur to the prospective teacher's seeking excellence in English studies and as an impediment to the incompetent's assignment to teach English. But we differ concerning the time to use them.

The processes which are of concern to our discussion of "bar exams" are the preparation, selection, and certification of English teachers, the administration of the high schools, and the limitation of membership in the NCTE. Our interest in preparation relates to the kind, extent, and quality of the prospective teacher's collegiate program of studies or an equivalent education to teach English. Selection applies to institutional procedures such as

admission to college, to English as a major concentration, to teacher education, and to student teaching; it applies to graduation of the capable student with the institution's recommendation that he be issued a certificate to teach English; it applies to the graduate's selection and employment by public school officials; and it might apply to admission to membership in the NCTE. Certification is the state's licensing of the teacher, which raises a question of standards and practices regarding issuance of the certificate in English. Our concern in school administration extends to accreditation of public schools and other means of enforcing standards of teacher preparation, certification, and assignment. Limitation of membership in the NCTE would mean that only those who met the standards of the qualifying examinations would be admitted with full privileges.

Mr. Braddock has proposed setting the "bar exams" outside the legal procedures and making them a test of membership in our special professional organization. I would propose that they be inserted as a selective legal procedure ahead of the issuance of the teacher certificate or license. In other words, I would say, to be eligible to take the qualifying examination for teaching English, an applicant should have completed or be in the senior year of a teacher education program of an accredited college or university, or hold a bachelor's or a master's degree and have evidence of an appropriate professional preparation to teach English which is recognized by an accredited institution. Furthermore, even though he had completed the prescribed courses in his college preparation, he would not receive a license to teach English, and could not legally enter the profession of English teaching, unless he had passed the "bar exams."

Let us consider the situation which has aroused us to propose "bar exams." Here first is the satisfactory preparation, which makes us disgusted with anything less. According to a consensus within our pro-

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fession, the suitable preparation for the beginning English teacher is a liberal and professional education with a concentration in language and literature. This implies completion of a carefully designed program of studies that extends through four or five years in an accredited college or university and leads to the bachelor's or master's degree. Often a student first earns a liberal arts degree with a major in English and later prepares to teach by completing a master of arts in teaching, or an equivalent professional program. The bachelor's requirements of teacher-preparing institutions which are accredited by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education range from 11 to 97 semester hours, *median* 46, in general education; range from 10 to 51 semester hours, *median* 23, in professional education; and range from 18 to 64 semester hours, *median* 30, in English as a major concentration. Completion of an approved program designed to prepare a teacher of English, together with the recommendation of the accredited institution that its graduate be issued a teacher's certificate in English, is no doubt the best assurance we now have of the beginning teacher's competency.

Prescription by the states sets lower standards. The median quantitative requirements which the states have set for a regular certificate to teach English in high school are satisfactory with respect to general education and professional education, but not with respect to English. For the high school English teacher, state certification requirements, measured in semester hours, in general education range from 25 to 104, *median* 40; in professional education range from 12 to 27, *median* 18; in the area of English, journalism, speech, and library science combined as the language arts, range from 0 to 60, *median* 18, for teaching English full time; range from 0 to 30, *median* 16, for teaching English part time.

Certificate standards, high or low, must be enforced by administrative procedures. Standards for accrediting the high schools must support certificate requirements if they are to be effective. Low accreditation standards, coupled with administrative laxness or malpractice, nullify respectable

certification. In 12 states, or more, where the certificate requirement for a major teaching field in English is 24 to 30 semester hours, the schools are accredited if the English teacher has at least 18 semester hours of English—quite legally. This teacher may be prepared in the social sciences or some other area, but the fact remains he is not competent to teach English.

The extent to which the teacher of English has only a minor preparation or less is not known precisely, but we have some indications. And it seems that the practice sometimes exceeds the legal indulgence permitted by accreditation standards. In 1953-1954 about one fifth of the Oklahoma high school English teachers had less than the standard-certificate minimum in English. In 1956 nearly one third of 710 English teachers questioned in Michigan had less than 24 semester hours of college English, and nearly one eighth had less than 15 semester hours of English—which was the state minimum requirement to teach the subject. In 1957 many of the 260 public high schools in South Dakota had no English teacher with more than 15 semester hours of English. In 1958 about one third of 440 English teachers in Wisconsin reported only a college minor in English, and 9 percent less than a minor. Conditions in some other states have been estimated to be worse than in Oklahoma, Michigan, South Dakota, and Wisconsin.

How could qualifying examinations improve the situation of low standards for English teacher certification and enforcement which I have described? Could "bar exams" make state certification require a suitable college preparation, or the equivalent, of every one who teaches English? Could they raise standards of accrediting the public school and other administrative procedures to enforce high certification requirements in English? Could setting up qualifying examinations as a test for membership in the NCTE bring about any of these improvements? I believe not. I am unwilling to substitute certificate examinations for a college preparation or its equivalent. This would in effect be to accept less than a bachelor's major in English as a requirement for teaching. This would concentrate

authority over teacher preparation in the state certification and accrediting agencies, which in many present instances are responsible for English teaching being in a sad condition.

Examinations as a means of meeting certificate requirements are not generally acceptable by the states. A recent survey published by *The Journal of Teacher Education*, June 1960, revealed that in 19 of the 50 states examinations are used in connection with teacher certification by the state agency alone or in cooperation with the preparing institutions. Five of the 19 states, namely Illinois, New Hampshire, South Carolina, West Virginia, and Wisconsin, give examinations as a substitute for college English, and a sixth state, Florida, gives examinations to validate English credit earned at an unaccredited college. South Carolina is the only state that requires every teacher to take examinations for a certificate. National Teacher Examinations, which are produced by the Educational Testing Service, are used by five states. The common examinations are used by Florida to validate work done at an unaccredited college; both the common and the optional examinations are used by New Hampshire to validate unaccredited work or to substitute for required courses, by South Carolina to grade the certificate in relation to competence, by West Virginia to determine competence, and by Wisconsin, within the college or university, to substitute for required courses. Responses of the state certification officers revealed mixed feelings toward certificate examinations. Some apparently view with shame the vestiges of an older time when a man or woman with meager schooling and apprenticeship became a licensed teacher by examination. In their replies to a questionnaire they hastened to say that their state does not employ teacher examinations—or rarely issues certificates on the basis of examination. On the other hand, some state officials—for example, those in South Carolina and West Virginia—are enthusiastic in support of certificate examinations. They belong to a recent move to provide flexibility of certification requirements and to ensure teacher competence.

As for examining applicants before admitting them to a teacher's organization, none of the 50 state officials who responded to the inquiry knew of such a thing in use or under consideration.

In my opinion, we had better drop the subject of "bar exams" as a test for membership in the NCTE and turn our efforts to other means of achieving our purpose. Our proposal for qualifying examinations is an indirect attack upon a professional abuse which we must also attack directly. Certification standards have not enforced themselves, and I believe that qualifying examinations, used either as a requirement for certification or as a test for membership in the NCTE, would not prevent the assignment of poorly prepared teachers to teach English unless strong means of enforcement were provided.

The abuse at which we are aiming is the ignorant English teacher who is assigned to teach English. I would make a direct attack upon this professional abuse. I would propose requiring completion of an approved program in English, or the equivalent recognized by an accredited institution; setting up qualifying examinations in English for entrance into the profession as an English teacher, whether or not the applicant intends to join the NCTE; making standards for accreditation of the schools equal the regular certificate requirements; and putting into effect enforcement measures such as these: (1) fines and imprisonment for teachers, members of boards of education, and school administrators—both at state and local levels—who are parties to a contract to teach English, or to the payment for teaching it, when the teacher does not have a valid certificate for English; (2) depriving the administrator and the teacher of their professional certificates when they are guilty in the foregoing instance; and (3) withholding state financial aid and accreditation from the school which assigns any one to teach English without a certificate in English. I grant these are stern measures, but think of the boy or girl who is subjected to an ignoramus in the place of an English teacher.

# Counciletter

NEWS OF THE YEAR

RUTH G. STRICKLAND

A line from Algernon Charles Swinburne's *Ode to England*, "All our past acclaim our future," seems to fit the Council as it rounds out half a century of growth and progress. This theme, selected for the Golden Anniversary Conference in Chicago, is applicable also to the significant, forward looking steps the organization has taken during the past year.

The Council has moved this year into its new home on the campus of the University of Illinois, in Champaign. To have achieved this, free of debt, without increase in dues or special appeals to membership is unique in the history of educational organizations. The list of Council members and subscribers has passed the 60,000 mark, thanks to the cooperative efforts of many loyal and energetic members. IBM equipment has been installed in the new building to take care of the work this large membership entails. Two new members have been added to the headquarters staff: Mrs. Enid Olson, formerly a teacher of English in Urbana, will serve as Publications Associate and Robert Whitman will give half of his time as Director of the Awards Program while he carries on graduate studies at the University.

On September 1, James R. Squire became Executive Secretary of the Council as J. N. Hook resumed full time duties as Professor of English and Counselor in Teacher Education at the University of Illinois. Dr. Squire has served as Associate Executive Secretary for a year, has the affairs of the Council well in hand and has demonstrated his capacity for creative leadership. We shall miss Nick Hook but shall continue to turn to him for counsel throughout

many years. We are grateful to him for the wise leadership that is responsible in large measure for the growth in breadth and depth which the Council has attained during his years of service as Executive Secretary.

A major project this year involves the establishment of the Research Foundation of the National Council of Teachers of English, established in honor of J. N. Hook. Through the Foundation, it will be possible to provide financial support for significant studies in the teaching of English of the kind which cannot be undertaken or supported by the Council. The management of the Foundation is to be centered in seven trustees and it is anticipated that the Foundation will be supported largely by grants and gifts though its creation is made possible by the transfer of Council funds set aside for the purpose. Such a Foundation will make possible research that is badly needed and point the way toward future improvement in the teaching of English.

An outgrowth of the work of the Committee on Committee Structure of which Francis Shoemaker was chairman is the formation of an Advisory Council whose task it will be to help the Executive Committee assess significant social, cultural and scholarly changes which should affect Council operation. The new Advisory Council includes representatives from five areas of professional scholarship which are represented by the following people: linguistics, W. Nelson Francis; literature, Robert Rogers; communication, Francis Shoemaker; teacher education, Alfred Grommon; curriculum, Alvina Burrows. The directors of commissions, chairman of the Research Committee, President, Past-President and Executive Secretary are also members. The task of studying trends and their significance for our field should be

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better achieved in the future through the work of this new Council.

The United States Information Agency has given the Council a grant of funds under which a group of scholars, selected by the Council, is beginning to prepare a six-volume series of textbooks and teachers' manuals to be used in the teaching of English in foreign lands. The unique feature in the series is the fact that it will be suitable for use with people of different native languages rather than aimed at users of a single language. All of the writers are experienced in teaching English abroad. These teaching materials are badly needed at the high school and adult level in many countries and USIA envisions the development of similar material to use in beginning English at the elementary level.

Evidence of nation-wide interest in the teaching of English is multiplying and manifests itself in a number of ways. Each year sees the development of more summer workshops for teachers of English from elementary school through college. This year the Council has co-sponsored eighteen of these workshops dealing with a variety of teaching problems and situated in all parts of the country.

More than twenty council affiliates have reported local and regional studies of teaching conditions in English. These are of special interest to an *ad hoc* committee appointed to review the needs of English for the purpose of gathering and weighing evidence of the need to broaden the National Defense Education Act to include the teaching of English. Other topics being studied by this special committee include teaching conditions in the high schools that have produced NCTE Achievement Award winners, standards for teacher preparation, changes in college programs in the English language and the need for imaginative national projects which will influence the teaching of English everywhere.

One recommendation of the Conference on Basic Issues appears to be on the way to implementation in a number of schools and school systems at both local and state levels. Curriculum committees are giving attention the need for an articulated English program from kindergarten through

high school and are calling on Council leaders for guidance in their work. The pre-convention workshop planned for Chicago on an articulated English program has a waiting list of applicants.

The Council has added a new monthly publication, *STUDIES IN THE MASS MEDIA* which will begin to appear in October. This is successor to *PHOTOPLAY GUIDES*, published for many years by William Lewin. The editor of the new publication is Joseph Mersand, a past-president of the Council. Each monthly issue of the publication will contain a study guide to a current motion picture, television program or other worthwhile offering in the popular arts.

James E. Miller, Jr., Chairman of the English Department of the University of Nebraska, is the new editor of *COLLEGE ENGLISH*. He has accepted the editorship for a three-year term beginning this fall. Dr. Miller is a specialist in contemporary literature and has written extensively during the last two years. He succeeds Frederick L. Gwynn, who has served with distinction for five years and has seen circulation of *COLLEGE ENGLISH* virtually double.

Seven new bulletins and books will be available to members by January 1, making the Golden Anniversary Year notable for its publications. A special bulletin for parents, *The First Two R's Plus*, should be given wide circulation. It covers the range of English curriculum from kindergarten through college. Three new aids are designed especially for elementary teachers: a 1960 revision of the elementary book list, *Adventuring with Books*, produced under the chairmanship of Muriel Crosby; *Teaching Children to Read*, edited by Dr. Crosby; and *Children's Writing: Research in Composition and Related Skills*, the 1960 Bulletin of the National Conference on Research in English, edited by Alvina Treut Burrows. *Fifty Years of English Teaching - A Historical Analysis of Presidential Addresses* by Sanford Radner, should be of interest to all members of the Council. *Patterns of English Usage* by Ruth Golden and *Helps for English Teachers*, a portfolio of articles sponsored by the Secondary Section and edited by Myrtle Gustafson

should prove helpful to many English teachers, as should *Essays on the Teaching of English*, a collection of papers delivered at the Yale Conference on English, and edited by Edward Noyes and Edward Gordon.

The Council is especially proud to present to its membership *Perspectives on English*, a collection of essays by past presidents of NCTE written in honor of Wilbur Hatfield and edited by Robert C. Pooley. This volume will be formally presented at the opening session of the Conference.

This has been a busy year for affiliates. Affiliate publications have expanded and have made noteworthy contributions, far too many to mention all of them. Especially worthy of mention are the publication by the California Council of Teachers of English of a *Scale for Evaluating High School Essays*, a tenth anniversary issue of the New York State Council's *English Record*, and attempts by the *New Jersey English Leaflet* to arouse interest and tap the thinking of readers.

The Council has continued its cooperation with other organizations. It shared programs or personnel with International Reading Association and American Library Association. It was represented at the White House Conference on Children and Youth by Richard Corbin, chairman of the Secondary Section and your president. Each year, representatives of the organization attend various regional and national meetings as official representatives.

Our European tours for English teachers continue popular. Special features this year were meeting with English teachers at Southampton, study at the University of London, the Passion Play at Oberammergau and the Olympic Games in Rome.

In honor of our fiftieth anniversary, your Executive Committee undertook this year

a series of Golden Anniversary Tours. Collectively, the members of the committee traveled approximately 100,000 miles, visited 32 states and spoke before 44 affiliate groups. The experience has enlarged our vision and drawn many of the groups closer to the parent organization. Among the special features of the Conference this year are four pre-convention workshops on the topics: An Articulated English Program, Professional Preparation of Teachers of English, Language Arts on the Elementary School, and Structural Linguistics in Secondary Classrooms.

At this Golden Anniversary Conference we shall look backward with appreciation and forward with anticipation. The fifty year history of the Council will be portrayed in special exhibits planned by James Mason and his committee and presided over by our past presidents. The Chicago committee has planned a delightful way to honor the past presidents at the opening session of the Conference and at the reception which follows it. A galaxy of literary stars will appear at the general sessions, J. B. Priestley, Richard Armour, Sean O'Faolain and Mark Van Doren. The many meetings planned by Second Vice President Hardy Finch and the three Section Chairmen will challenge us to reevaluate what we are doing and move forward to new goals in the teaching of English.

The dedication shown by members of affiliate groups as we have met them on the Anniversary Tours, the far-reaching planning of the Executive Committee and Board of Directors, the growth in Council membership and the willingness of all members of the Council to work in and through it for the good of the profession augur well for the future.

*Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind. Absolve you to yourself, and you shall have the suffrage of the world.*

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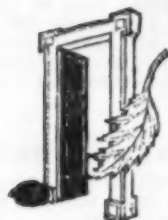
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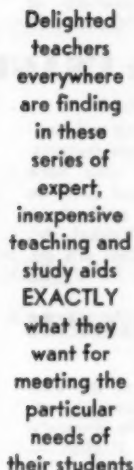
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